

Heidelberg University

Spring 2010

POL 377

Human Rights & Social Justice

M-W-F 2-2:50 PM

Aigler, Room 201

Instructor: Dr. Marc O'Reilly

Office Hours: M-W-F 1-2 PM, T-Th 4-5 PM, and on Appointment

Office: Campus Center, Room 307

Mail Boxes: Aigler, Room A100 or Office of Int'l & Multicultural Programs @ Campus Center

E-Mail: moreilly@heidelberg.edu

Web: <http://www.heidelberg.edu/~moreilly>

Phone # 419.448.2208

Course Content

This lecture/seminar class examines human rights and social justice, controversial subjects in world politics. In this course, we will discuss "evil" as a violation of human rights, what prompted individuals, groups, and societies to tout human rights, how a worldwide human rights movement evolved, theories and meanings of human rights, whether human rights constitute a Western or global norm (i.e., value), and how individuals (such as Elie Wiesel, Aung Sung Suu Kyi, Nelson Mandela, and William Schulz) and organizations (such as the United Nations, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the International Criminal Court) expose human-rights violations and seek social justice.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, you should be familiar with the causes, manifestations, and effects of genocide; the genesis of what would become in the 20th century a worldwide human rights movement; the theories and various meanings of human rights; the debate over cultural relativism; the institutions and organizations that monitor and promote human rights as well as document abuses; and, finally, how human rights relates to other global issues. In this course, you will write an informative, analytical, and insightful paper on some aspect of human rights. After drafting your paper, you will present your research to the class. For your final exam, you will answer two broad questions that will require you to integrate everything you will have learned throughout the course. This take-home assignment will prepare you for whatever career you pursue following your graduation from Heidelberg University – whether graduate school, law school, professional or other work. Upon completion of your work for this class, I will consider you well versed in the matter of human rights and social justice.

Required Readings (The books can be purchased at the Heidelberg Bookstore)

- Elie Wiesel, *Night* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1960).
- Debra L. DeLaet, *The Global Struggle for Human Rights: Universal Principles in World Politics* (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2006).
- Additional photocopied readings will be provided in class throughout the semester.

Course Requirements

Summaries/Analyses: Students will write summaries/analyses of two (2) readings assigned in the first six (6) weeks of the semester. Each summary/analysis will be due in class on a Wednesday. Each summary/analysis will: 1) *Summarize* the readings and 2) *Analyze* the readings. When you analyze, you should explain the themes, concepts, cases/examples, and methodologies used in the reading. Each summary/analysis must be **1-2 pages single-spaced** and will be due on Wednesday. You will receive one of two grades on each assignment: Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory. **OBJECTIVE:** The summaries/analyses ensure that you will be prepared to discuss material in class. Given the seminar format, you must be familiar with the readings in order to contribute to the various conversations we will have throughout the semester. **DUE DATES:** either JANUARY 13, 20, 27, FEBRUARY 3, 10, 17.

NGO Memo: Students will write a 3-5 page (**single spaced or space and a half**) on an individual, group, or issue that an NGO (such as Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch) is spotlighting. See the relevant NGO website for information. In the memo, students will address the memo to the head of the NGO they are studying, provide history (e.g., biographical information), an analysis of the human-rights issue(s) (e.g., free speech) involved, and a recommendation as to if and/or how the matter could be better handled and/or promoted from a human-rights standpoint. Students are strongly recommended to submit a draft of their memo. **OBJECTIVES:** The NGO memo allows you to study in depth a person and/or issue and become familiar with the important role(s) that NGOs play in the promotion and adherence to global human-rights norms. **DUE: FEBRUARY 26.**

Exam: Students will write a take-home, cumulative Final that will be due on May 2. Exam will be of the essay kind. We will review material before the exam. **OBJECTIVE:** The exam enables you to summarize, analyze, and synthesize class material. **FINAL DUE: MAY 2.**

Paper: Students must turn in a term paper, **10-12 pages double-spaced**, on some human-rights or social-justice issue. Please let me know ASAP what your topic will be. A full draft will be due on March 14. You will read a couple of other papers written by your classmates. You will write or type up comments. The objective will be to provide constructive criticism so that papers can be improved. I will read all the drafts and offer my own thoughts on how each of you can modify your paper. Once your draft has been returned to you, you will meet with me so that we can discuss your work. Your final paper will be due on May 4. As for the assignment itself, you will write up an analysis of the issue that you have researched throughout the semester. I will provide

you with instructions on how to organize and write your paper. If you have questions regarding the assignment, please raise them in class, speak to me during office hours, or e-mail me. You can turn in an early draft of your paper at any point during the term. **OBJECTIVES:** The paper allows you to improve your analytical and writing skills. By turning in a draft, you will have an opportunity to revise your work using student and instructor comments to guide you. By rewriting your paper, you should be able to ameliorate it and thus earn a better grade than you would have otherwise. DRAFT DUE: MARCH 14; FINAL PAPER DUE: MAY 2.

Useful web sites to visit as you start your research include:

- <http://www.amnesty.org> (web site for Amnesty International).
- <http://www.hrw.org> (web site for Human Rights Watch).
- <http://www.hrcberkeley.org> (Human Rights Center at the University of California, Berkeley).
- <http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/cchrp> (The Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard University).
- http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/human_rights_quarterly. To read articles from *Human Rights Quarterly*, you must access the MUSE network via a Beeghly Library database computer. Should you need assistance, ask for Nancy Rubenstein, the reference librarian.

Remember that the Academic Success Center can assist you as you write your semester paper

Oral Presentation: Students must present their research to the class (on either March 29, 31, April 7, 9, 12, 14, 21) by way of a 15-minute presentation. Students will discuss their paper for 10 minutes (you can use notes and a PowerPoint outline, but should not read from your paper). A 5-minute Question and Answer session will follow. The readers of drafts will ask questions first, followed by the rest of the class. **OBJECTIVES:** Presentations allow you to organize your thoughts effectively, enable you to try out your ideas before an audience, and improve your oratorical skills. ORAL PRESENTATIONS: MARCH 29, 31, APRIL 7, 9, 12, 14, 21.

Participation: Students must attend class regularly (I will keep track of your attendance), provide input (in the form of questions and answers) during lectures and class/group discussion, respect classmates and the instructor, and conduct themselves in a mature and responsible way. **OBJECTIVES:** Improve your oratorical, persuasion, and listening skills and recognize the importance of proper comportment and etiquette in the classroom.

Distribution of Grades

Summaries/Analyses	10%
NGO Memo	20%
Final Exam	20%
Paper	20%
Oral Presentation	20%
Participation	10%

Late papers and exams will be docked one grade (A to A-, for example) for every day past the deadline. Also note that any student guilty of cheating or plagiarism will receive an F (i.e., 0) for the assignment and can be dismissed from Heidelberg University.

Class Outline and Reading Assignments

WEEK 1: Introduction & Evil: Genocide in Europe.

Readings: “Speaking Truth to Power,” *The Economist* (Xerox); “Preventing Genocide,” *The Economist* (Xerox); and Elie Wiesel, *Night*.

WEEK 2: Evil: Genocide in Asia.

Reading: Samantha Power, “Cambodia: ‘Helpless Giant’” in “*A Problem from Hell*”: *America in the Age of Genocide* (Xerox).

Video: “The Killing Fields” (Wed.).

WEEK 3: Evil: Genocide in Africa.

Readings: Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda*, pp. 3-62 (Xerox); Richard Just, “Darfur: The Truth Will Not Set You Free,” *The New Republic* (Xerox); and Nicholas D. Kristof, “A New Chance for Darfur,” *The New York Times* (Xerox).

Video: “The Triumph of Evil” (Fri.).

No class on Monday (Martin Luther King, Jr., Day).

WEEK 4: Visions and the Birth of Human Rights.

Reading: Paul Gordon Lauren, *The Evolution of International Human Rights: Visions Seen*, chs. 1-2 (Xerox).

WEEK 5: Theory & Meaning of International Human Rights.

Readings: Debra L. DeLaet, *The Global Struggle for Human Rights*, chs. 1-2; and Jack Donnelly, *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice*, chs. 1-2 (Xerox).

WEEK 6: Cultural Relativism.

Readings: DeLaet, ch. 3; and Michael Ignatieff, "The Attack on Human Rights," *Foreign Affairs* (Xerox).

WEEK 7: What Can Be Done: Human Rights Campaigns.

Readings: Web sites of Amnesty International & Human Rights Watch; Nicholas D. Kristof, "If This Isn't Slavery, What Is?" *The New York Times* (Xerox); and "China's Charter 08," *New York Review of Books* (Xerox).

No class on Wednesday and Friday (Dr. O'Reilly will be out of town).

WEEK 8: Human Rights in Practice.

Reading: DeLaet, chs. 4-7.

NGO MEMO DUE: FEBRUARY 26

Last day to withdraw from course is February 26

SPRING BREAK: FEBRUARY 27-MARCH 14

DRAFT DUE: MARCH 14 @ 11:59 PM

WEEK 9: Human Rights and the Quest for Justice.

Readings: DeLaet, chs. 8-11 & Conclusions; Kenneth A. Rodman, "Darfur and the Limits of Legal Deterrence," *Human Rights Quarterly* (Xerox); Mahmood Mamdani, "The New Humanitarian Order," *The Nation* (Xerox); "Bringing the Wicked to the Dock," *The Economist* (Xerox); and "Sudan's Leader Is Accused, but Others Can Expect to Follow," *The Economist* (Xerox).

WEEK 10: The United States & Human Rights.

Reading: Excerpts from William Schulz, ed., *The Future of Human Rights: U.S. Policy for a New Era* (Xerox).

WEEK 11: Oral Presentations.

EASTER BREAK: APRIL 1-5

WEEK 12: Oral Presentations.

WEEK 13: Oral Presentations. No class on Friday (Dr. O'Reilly will be out of town).

WEEK 14: Oral Presentations. No class on Monday (Dr. O'Reilly will be out of town).

WEEK 15: Summary.

FINAL EXAM DUE: SUNDAY, MAY 2 @ 11:59 PM

REVISED PAPER DUE: TUESDAY, MAY 4 @ 2 PM