

PSCI 338-001:

International Human Rights

Fall 2020 | TR 12:45-2:15 pm
Classroom: Brewer Hall 141 / Canvas

Professor: Dr. Benjamin Gross
Office: Brewer Hall 220B
Physical Office Hours:
T/R: 9:30-10:30 am & 2:30-3:30 pm
Virtual Office Hours:
M/W/F: 3:00-5:00 pm
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Well, you'll work harder / With a gun in your back / For a bowl of rice a day / Slave for soldiers / Till you starve / Then your head is skewered on a stake /
Now you can go where the people are one / Now you can go where they get things done / What you need, my son... / What you need, my son... / Is a holiday in Cambodia
- Jello Biafra, "Holiday in Cambodia" (1980)

Course Rational:

During the [2007 MTV Video Music Awards](#), the [Foo Fighters](#) and Serj Tankian (of [System of a Down](#)) performed a [cover](#) of "Holiday in Cambodia". It was not lost on viewers that the [audience](#) failed to understand the song. A work of satire, the lyrics compare well-off college students and [social justice warriors](#) (before such a term existed) to those living in the [Khmer Rouge](#) regime. Under the leadership of [Pol Pot](#), the Cambodian government engaged in a four-year genocide. In just a few years, the government killed between [1.2 and 2.8 million people](#). The Foo Fighters may have intended to use their platform to produce awareness of the 30-year-old atrocity. Performing the song in a Las Vegas suite, with an audience composed of the very people the song is critical of, at best produced irony.

Though, it may be unfair to be so critical of the crowd. Yes, those who understood the song could sit on their sofas, call out the hypocrisy, and bask in their moral superiority. But how would this make them different than those in the audience? What were these [slacktivist](#) doing to end the genocide in [Darfur](#), child labor in [China](#), or torture via the actions of the [United States](#)? What did these people know about the study of human rights?

This course is an introduction to the foundation, violation, and protection of individual physical integrity rights. Our class is guided by three major questions. First, do human rights exist? Even if your answer is no, [many](#) do think human rights exist. We must ask then, if many think human rights exist, why do states violate them? Are there [patterns](#) of abuse that exist over time and space? In particular, we will examine states that engage in torture and government killings. Finally, if patterns exist, we must ask, how are human rights protected? We will examine how a variety of solutions have been offered and how effective these solutions are.

Through this course, you will become aware of multiple factors that exacerbate or decrease the violation of individual human rights. As an introduction, however, you will only learn some of these factors. We will not be able to cover everything, such as the effect of the [environment](#), [economy](#), [religion](#), and more on human rights. You will, however, gain insight into this general subject. We will also develop your reading, thinking, reflection, and presenting skills. This will improve your ability to engage in critical, analytical, rational, and methodical arguments; which will allow you to continue your study of human rights, if you wish, after our semester. Furthermore, through engaging with real-world scenarios, you will leave this class more prepared to face the [challenges](#) you will face in your life. At the very least, you will be prepared to think and act for yourself the next time a musician engages in the subject.

Course Goals:

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Recognize multiple historical origins of the international human rights regime;
- Clarify the distinction between positive and negative obligations towards human rights;
- Understand why states contest responsibilities of human rights;
- Explain ways that human rights are violated, different systems of measuring these violations, and the amount of cross-sectional variation of these violations;
- Describe multiple domestic and international solutions for protecting human rights;
- Comprehend the difference between retributive and restorative approaches of transitional justice;
- Make policy recommendations based on theoretical and empirical evidence;
- Acquire a greater appreciation of continuing questions of international human rights;
- Read peer-reviewed journal articles to analyze the theory, hypotheses, and importance of the article; as well as assess the strength and validity of its theory and findings;
- Clearly and concisely communicate arguments both verbally and written, which will develop and progress your critical-thinking and problem-solving skills.

Required Texts:

* Carey, Sabine C., Mark Gibney, and Steven C. Poe. *The Politics of Human Rights: The Quest for Dignity*. Cambridge University Press. ISBN: [9780521614054](https://doi.org/10.1017/9780521614054).

* Readings posted to Canvas **OR** existing on JSTOR.

Assignments and Grading:

Research Article Assignments	15%
Film Assignments	15%
Online Simulation 1	10%
Online Simulation 2	10%
Op-ed Paper	20%
Exam 1	15%
Exam 2	15%

Grading Scale:

A = 90-100
B = 80-89
C = 70-79
D = 60-69
F = <60

Assignment Details:

Research Article Assignments:

Throughout the semester, students will read, analyze, and explain scholarly literature concerning human rights. Homework assignments accompany many of these academic articles. These homework assignments account for 10% of your final grade.

Learning how to read academic articles is challenging. The professor includes these homework assignments to assist students to develop this ability. In addition, these assignments foster a student's critical-thinking and communication skills.

Film Assignments:

We will watch documentaries, investigative journalism stories, and academic interviews during the semester. Handouts accompany these uses of media. Accurate completion of these handouts account for 10% of your final grade, as this demonstrates active participation and engagement with these opportunities.

The professor includes this area of assessment to achieve multiple substantive course goals. Media can effectively educate us on human rights. Thus, the professor uses this medium to further our empirical knowledge in the substantive areas of the course.

Online Simulations:

There are two online simulations for this course. They are on Tuesday, September 22nd and Thursday, October 22nd. Each online simulation is worth 10% of your final grade. I will give more details about these simulations as we near their dates; I will provide detailed information on the day of the simulation. These simulations are group assignments. I will create the groups. **There are no make-up for the simulations.**

The professors utilizes simulations as a form of assessment to connect theoretical arguments, empirical observations, and policy decisions. This allows students to put their knowledge and skills into practice for potential real-world situations.

Op-ed Paper:

Each student will write an op-ed column on a current event related to international human rights. The op-ed must develop and support a thoughtful thesis. You will model your work to be like an op-ed column in major newspapers. Students should familiarize themselves with op-ed columns in publications such as the [*New York Times*](#), [*Wall Street Journal*](#), [*Washington Post*](#), [*Chicago Tribune*](#), and [*Christian Science Monitor*](#). The latter of these does a good job of reporting on international events. The op-ed is due on Thursday, November 19th. It must be a minimum of 750 words and a maximum of 1,250 words. I will share more information about the assignment on Thursday, October 22nd.

One of the core elements of a liberal education is the ability to evaluate information, make an informed opinion on that subject, and then clearly communicate those ideas to an audience. Thus, this assessment allows students to further their substantive knowledge of the course by researching a topic of their choice, analyzing this topic, and then coherently sharing information to others. Furthermore, this gives students practice with a form of writing that is useful in the real world.

Exams:

This course has two section exams. Both exams are composed of 50 multiple choice questions. Each section exam assess students on materials from that section of the course. Thus, the exam students take during our final exam period evaluates them only on information that we examine after our first section exam.

The professors uses this form of assessment to evaluate a student's mastery of the information of the course.

Classroom Behavior:

Courtesy and regard for one another will guide classroom behavior. Since this is course concerning politics, discussion can be passionate at times. We will always treat everyone with respect, especially during debates. This means listening and letting a classmate finish their thought before responding, debating ideas (not people), speaking to each other in a civil tone, and refusing to engage in personal attacks.

During these discussions, I ask you all to respect the ideas of your fellow students. This does not mean, however, that you must agree with these ideas. You are welcome to ask your classmates to explain their ideas, to ask them questions you see in their ideals, and so forth.

Students must be attentive during all aspects of class. I will remove students who sleep, read the newspaper, persistently talk with other students, text, use their cell phones, surf the internet, use computers for any other use than note taking, or are otherwise inattentive/disruptive from the class session. Students that engage in these behaviors repeatedly are subject to dismissal from the course, at the professor's request.

Other Policies:

Late Work:

I only accept the op-ed paper after its due date. Every business day it is late, it loses half a letter grade (e.g., B+ to B). One week after its due date, the professor will no longer accept late op-ed papers. Any student, who does not submit their op-ed paper on time, or within one week after its due date, will receive a zero for that assignment.

To be clear, this means I do not accept late work for assignments within “Research Article Assignments” or “Film Assignments.”

Make-up Exams:

If you are unable to attend class the day of an exam, you must notify the professor immediately. I only give make-up exams to students who are unable to attend class due to a pre-arranged religious observation, university approved event, or emergency (e.g. hospitalization, death in the family, car accident requiring the Jaws of Life, so forth).

To take a make-up exam, I require documentation. You must schedule a make-up exam as soon as possible, at a date and time mutually agreed upon by yourself and the professor. Make-up exams are comprised of short answer and essay questions that evaluates a student on the same material comprising the multiple-choice exam.

Academic Integrity:

This course will not tolerate academic dishonesty. The professor adheres to and enforces JSU’s policy on academic honesty (e.g. cheating, plagiarism, forgery, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, and sabotage). Violations of academic integrity in this course will be addressed in compliance with the procedures laid out in JSU’s [student handbook](#) (see pages 57 & 71-76).

Accommodations:

I am more than happy to accommodate any student with a documented disability. If you have a disability that affects your work in this class, and for which you require adjustments or accommodations, please see a staff member in [Disability Support Services](#) (139 Daugette Hall // (256) 782.8380 // dss@jsu.edu) so your accommodations can be considered.

Please speak with Disability Support Services (DSS) and the professor, as early in the semester as possible. Students that receive accommodation letters or Individualized Post-Secondary Plans (IPP’s) should meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential.

Religious Observances:

If assigned work conflicts with your religious holidays, please tell me in advance so we can make alternative plans. Informing me of religious obligations after the fact, however, will not count as an excuse.

Military-Connected Student Statement:

The Office of Veteran Services serves all active duty, guard, reserve, veteran, and dependent students at JSU. If you have any questions about Veteran Services please contact the office at (256) 782-8838, veterans@jsu.edu, or at the physical location in the basement of Daugette Hall. If you are a student currently serving in the military (Active Duty, Guard, or Reserves) with the potential of being called to military service or training

during the course of the semester, you are encouraged to contact me no later than the first week of the course. The professor may make accommodations for this absence or suggest that you take the course at another time.

Questions About Your Grades:

I cannot discuss grades over [e-mail or phone](#) due to FERPA regulations. These protect your privacy; see [here](#) for more information. I post grades on Canvas. **Please use the grade calculator to understand your grade.** If you need to discuss your grade, we can arrange a Skype or Microsoft Teams meeting. You will have to show your student ID prior to the discussion of your grade. At the end of the semester, your final grade will only change if there is a mathematical error.

Withdraws:

Please be advised, the last date to withdraw from the course without academic penalty is Friday, November 6th. There are other important dates regarding withdrawing from the course, which are [here](#). If you choose to withdraw from the course, it is your responsibility to complete the process. The professor will report the final grade to the university for all students enrolled in the course.

Student Notifications:

I post all notifications on Canvas via the Announcements section of our course. Be sure to check these for all notifications.

E-mail Policy:

I will do my best to respond to all e-mails within 24 hours. All questions that the syllabus can answer will receive the response: "Please refer to your syllabus."

To ensure that you have read the syllabus prior to e-mailing me, the first e-mail you send to me must include a picture of ALF. If your first e-mail does not have a picture of ALF, I will respond to your e-mail with: "Please review the syllabus." This policy ensures that you have helped yourself by using the tools I have provided you before coming to me for help.

In order to help response time, please include an appropriate subject line in your e-mail. Furthermore, please take time to compose an e-mail with proper etiquette and language. I will not respond to e-mails constructed in a manner like, "Yo, Dr B i will b 18 4 clas 2day" or using emojis to represent words/ideas.

Tutoring resources at JSU:

All JSU students can access online tutoring assistance through tutor.com. To access tutor.com, log into Canvas and click the tutor.com link in the navigation pane. For more information about tutor.com contact Debra James at dmjames@jsu.edu. For assistance with writing, The Writing Center is available through online appointments: <http://www.jsu.edu/english/jsu-writing-clinic.html>

Title IX:

Jacksonville State University does not discriminate on the basis of sex in the educational programs or activities that it operates. JSU is required, by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and the Department of Education regulations to implement Title IX, not to discriminate in such a manner. This requirement to not discriminate in educational programs and activities extends to employment by the university and to admission thereto. This may include sexual harassment, sexual

misconduct, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking and other conduct that is addressed in our "Sex-Based Harassment and Misconduct Policy."

Anyone with knowledge of this type of conduct is asked to immediately report such incidents to the University Police Department at (256) 782-5050 or the Title IX Coordinator at (256) 782-5769. If an individual wishes to keep the information confidential, the individual speak with a counselor at the Counseling Services office at (256) 782-5475 or a medical provider at JSU's Health Center (256) 782-5310.

For more information about Title IX or to report a concern, please visit the JSU Title IX webpage at www.jsu.edu/titleix.

How to be Successful in this Class:

The best way to be successful is to be prepared. Being prepared means reading all of the assignment carefully and, most likely, reread the assignment prior to class. These texts are carefully constructed arguments, which sometimes only become visible after multiple interactions. By reading the assignments prior to class, you will be able to fully participate and get the most out of our classroom experience.

Furthermore, good note taking is vital. Take [physical notes](#). Learn to listen carefully. I find students who write down the questions being asked, and then the responses to these questions, are the most successful. If you only write down the answer the note is meaningless, as it lacks the context of the question.

After class, review your notes to see if they make sense. By reviewing them sooner than later you will be able to remember things from class to sort out any points of confusion in your notes.

Finally, get together with other students to form study groups. If you get together periodically and go over notes, you are more likely to have a complete set of notes. You will not only be able to go over your notes together to fill in the gaps, but by discussing with each other the topics of the class you might come to new insights.

Tentative Class Schedule:

PHR = *The Politics of Human Rights*

Date	Topic	Reading
T-8/18	Introduction	NO READING
Do Human Rights Exist?		
R-8/20	Conceptual Origins of Human Rights	PHR: 7-24 Canvas (see appendix below)
T-8/25	The International Regime	PHR: 24-39 Canvas (see appendix below)
R-8/27	Realism (Pragmatism) or Liberalism (Black Letter Law)?	Canvas (see appendix below)
T-9/1	Norms	JSTOR (see appendix below)
R-9/3	State Responsibilities	PHR: 41-56
T-9/8	Contested Responsibilities	PHR: 56-69
Why Do States Violate Human Rights?		
R-9/10	Measuring and Studying Human Rights	PHR: 103-125
T-9/15	Patterns, Trends, and Democracy	PHR: 103-125 & JSTOR (see appendix below)
R-9/17	Rights with Responsibilities (Torture)	PHR: 71-81
T-9/22	Online Simulation	Canvas (see appendix below)
R-9/24	Rights with Responsibilities (more)	PHR: 81-99
T-9/29	Film & Discussion	NO READING
R-10/1	Film & Discussion	NO READING
T-10/6	Catch-Up Day & Review	NO READING
R-10/8	Exam 1	NO READING
T-10/13	Why are Human Rights Violated?	PHR: 127-144
R-10/15	Why are Human Rights Violated?	PHR: 145-161
T-10/20	Government Killing: History, Causes, Patterns, and Trends	JSTOR (see appendix below)
R-10/22	Online Simulation	READING TBD
How Are Human Rights Protected?		
T-10/27	Intervening to Protect Human Rights	PHR: 165-185
R-10/29	The Responsibility to Protect & Naming and Shaming	PHR: 185-195 JSTOR (see appendix below)
T-11/3	Rebuilding Society in the Aftermath	PHR: 197-213
R-11/5	Rebuilding Society in the Aftermath	PHR: 213-223
T-11/10	Film & Discussion	NO READING

R-11/12	Film & Discussion	NO READING
T-11/17	Towards the Future	PHR: 226-228 JSTOR (see appendix below)
R-11/19	Reflection & Review	NO READING
T-12/8	Exam 2 (10:30 AM - 12:30 PM)	NO READING

Reading Appendix:

8/20

Lauren, Paul Gordon. 2011. *The Evolution of International Human Rights*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. pp. 5-32

8/25

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Available at URL:
<https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>

8/27

Forsythe, David P. 2000 *Human Rights in International Relations*, New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 3-27

9/1

Finemore, Martha and Kathryn Sikkink. 1988. "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change." *International Organization* 52(4): 887-917.

9/15

Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce, George W. Downs, Alastair Smith, and Feryal Marie Cherif. 2005. "Thinking inside the Box: A Closer Look at Democracy and Human Rights." *International Studies Quarterly* 49(3): 439-457.

9/22

Bravin, Jess. 2007. "The Conscience of the Colonel." *The Wall Street Journal*, 31 March:
<https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB117529704337355155>

Bowden, Mark. 2007. "The Point: In Defense of Waterboarding." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 26 December: http://www.philly.com/inquirer/opinion/20071223_The_Point_In_defense_of_waterboarding.html. (The article no longer exists. Read this version from our Canvas page).

10/20

Harff, Barbara and Ted Robert Gurr. 1988. "Toward Empirical Theory of Genocides and Politicides: Identification and Measurement of Cases since 1945." *International Studies Quarterly* 32(3): 359-71.

Valentino, Benjamin, Paul Huth, and Dylan Balch-Lindsay. 2004. "Draining the Sea: Mass Killing and Guerilla Warfare." *International Organization* 58(2): 375-407.

10/29

Lebovic, James H. and Eric Voeten. 2006 "The Politics of Shame: The Condemnation of Country Human Rights Practices in the UNCHR." *International Studies Quarterly* 50(4): 861-888.

11/17

Breuning, Marijke and John Ishiyama. 2011. "Orphans and Political Instability." *Social Science Quarterly* 92(4): 1002-1020.

Feingold, David A. 2005. "Human Trafficking." *Foreign Policy*: 26-32.

Additional readings may be added with proper notice to students.