

# PSCI 338-001:

## International Human Rights

Fall 2022 | TR 11:00 am-12:30 pm  
Classroom: Brewer Hall 228

**Professor:** Dr. Benjamin Gross

**Office:** Brewer Hall 205D

**Office Hours:**

*Physical* – T/R: 8-9 am & 2:30-4:00 pm

*Virtual* – W: 9:00 am – 2:00 pm

*Appointment* – contact for mutually agreed upon date and time

**E-mail:** Bgross@jsu.edu

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 extra-legal 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 of human rights.

## 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 differences between a retributive and restorative approach 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 identify and 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 to be found via JSTOR.

## Assessments and Grading:

Attendance & Participation	10%
Professionalism	10%
In-Class Simulation 1	5%
In-Class Simulation 2	5%
Tocqueville Lectures	10%
Op-ed Paper	20%
Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	20%

## Grading Scale:

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

## Assessment Details:

### **Attendance & Participation:**

We come to best understand complex ideas through examination, questions, and conversations. As such, this course demands active participation from all students. We all have some insights regarding questions of what are human rights, why are they violated, and how are they protected. Analyzing, connecting, and thinking through our readings together – via dialogue – will not only show us how our authors understand these questions but also force us to confront our own understanding.

Attendance is taken at the start of each class. You are only excused from class for a pre-arranged religious observation, university approved event, or emergency (e.g., funeral, ER visit, serious car accident, etc.). In the event of missing class, you need to provide verified documentation of the cause of your absence upon returning to class.

Participation is recorded during each class period. Participation includes asking & answering questions, sharing ideas & observations, contributing & actively listening to dialogues, engaging & joining in-class activities (this differs from our in-class simulations), and partaking & being involved in any small group work.

*Rationale for this assessment:* By engaging in our class, you increase the likelihood that you will learn information and grow as thinker. In addition to these benefits, participating in class is likely to help you persist through challenging course materials and make class more enjoyable. The hope of the professor is that this assessment is not necessary. The professors, however, includes this assessment to assist those who need the motivation of a grade to participate and engage with the class.

### **Professionalism:**

All students begin the semester with 10% of their course grade completed. To keep this 10%, students need to engage in professional behavior within the setting of the course (although, hopefully this behavior extends beyond the boundaries of this class). A student loses points from her/his professionalism grade when she/he engages in unprofessional behaviors and activities. These behaviors and activities, as well as how many points are lost for engaging in them, are found in the professionalism addendum located in our Canvas shell.

*Rationale for this assessment:* Students are graded on professional behavior to prepare them their future career. I have spoken with individuals in numerous sectors (e.g., accounting, mental health, logistics, construction, healthcare, and more). Consistently, these individuals inform me that recent college graduates either did not get a job offer or were fired quickly upon being hired due to unprofessional behaviors. The time to develop professionalism is now, not upon graduation.

### **In-Class Simulations:**

There are two in-class simulations. These are on Thursday, September 29 and Tuesday, November 1. Each in-class simulation is worth 10% of your course grade.

Information is given prior to the simulations that will assist you in preparing for the assessment. This information includes a rubric. Additional explanation and details concerning the simulation are shared at the beginning of the simulation session.

There are no make-up simulations – if you miss class, you receive a zero for the simulation completed that day. Engagement with a simulation does not count towards your participation assessment.

*Rationale for this assessment:* Bloom's taxonomy of learning describes applying, analyzing, and evaluating as higher-level educational abilities than remembering and understanding (although each category is preconditioned on competency in previous categories). To be successful in these simulations, students must apply, analyze, and evaluate their work with regards to the information contained in this course. Thus, these simulations stimulate higher levels of learning, which develops a nuanced understanding of the concepts. Furthermore, these simulations engage with real world situations. As such, they prepare you by demonstrating how to use the discipline of political science to apply, analyze, and evaluate political and policy decisions.

### **Tocqueville Lectures:**

Jacksonville State University is proud to host the Tocqueville Lectures Series. This series brings lectures to present on topics that foster the academic environment of the campus. These lectures relate to topics that are important with ideas in our course.

As a student in an upper-level political science course, these lectures are excellent an opportunity for exposure to new ideas, practicing engagement within the discipline, and developing a professional connection. All students are required to attend two Tocqueville Lectures. By attending a lecture, you earn 5% of your course grade.

These lectures will be presented via hybrid or virtual format. More information about the lecture modalities, dates, and registration process is shared during the course.

*Rationale for this assessment:* Students are graded on active participation in Tocqueville Lectures as this engagement demonstrates the ability to participate with the materials of this course in a professional setting. This will help to prepare students for how to engage with presentations in academic, business, and governmental settings.

### **Op-Ed Paper:**

Each student will write an Op-Ed column on a current event related to international human rights. The Op-Ed should develop and support a thoughtful thesis concerning the event. It should also be modeled after an op-ed column that is found in major newspapers. Students will want to 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 very good job of reporting on international events.

The Op-Ed is due on Thursday, November 17. It must be a minimum of 750 words and a maximum of 1,250 words. More information about the assignment is shared during class on Thursday, October 20.

*Rationale for this assessment:* Being able to write a clear, concise, and coherent argument is the cornerstone of a liberal education. Furthermore, this is a skill set that transcends major, college, and career. Indeed, terminology such as BLUF (bottom line up front) from the military, inverted pyramid from journalism, and more show how this skill is in high demand across numerous sectors. Instead of writing an academic paper that is helpful for those interested in graduate studies, the composition of an Op-Ed will develop a style of composition that you are more likely to use after graduation. Furthermore, it requires you to explain complicated concepts and findings to a general audience. This is a key trait of strong writing and communication. Finally, it is possible to publish this work (e.g., see [this](#) previous student's work), which provides the opportunity to make this assignment meaningful beyond our classroom.

### **Exams:**

This course has two section exams. Each exam is composed of 50 multiple choice questions. Each exam assesses students on materials from that section of the course. Thus, the exam students take during the final exam period evaluates students only on information that was examined after the first exam.

These exams occur within class. They are closed book, note-free, and technology-free exams. **Once the first exam is submitted to the professor, a student cannot begin an exam.** Additional rules about the exam are included on the exams themselves.

*Rationale for this assessment:* These exams ensure that students can remember, recall, and release factual content about the subject matter. This ensures that students are competent in the basic concepts, ideas, methods, findings, and existing challenges in the topic of international human rights.

### **Classroom Behavior:**

Courtesy and regard for one another will guide classroom behavior. Since this course concerns politics and human rights, discussion can be passionate at times. During class, we will treat everyone with respect; especially during dialogues. 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 our dialogues, I ask you all to respect the viewpoints of your fellow students. Viewpoints, however, should be challenged.

Students are expected to be attentive during all aspects of class. 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 (although due to [findings](#), I strongly suggest against this) or are otherwise inattentive/disruptive in class will be asked to leave the class, lose professionalism points, and will be subject to being dismissed from the course at the professor's request.

## Other Policies:

### **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 individual assessments grades on Canvas. I do not, however, display the grade summary (i.e., percentage in the course). This is because this "grade" is misleading. The reported percentage considers performance on submitted work without reference to the weight of those assessments to your course grade. Multiple times, students have thought they had a grade due to this "tool" only to discover their grade was different.

To ensure students fully understand their course grades, I have created a grade calculator tool that can be downloaded from our Canvas page. **Please use this tool to understand your grade.** If you need to discuss your grade, we can arrange a meeting during office hours. At the end of the semester, your course grade will only change if it can be demonstrated that there is a mathematical error in the calculation of your grade.

### **Late Work:**

Only the Op-Ed paper can be submitted after its due date. Every business day the assessment is late it loses three percentage points (e.g., 89% to 86%). One week after its due date, the professor no longer accepts a late Op-Ed paper. Any student, who does not submit an Op-Ed paper on Thursday, November 17, or a late submission by Thursday, November 24, will receive a zero for this assessment.

### **Make-up Exams:**

If you are unable to attend class the day of an exam, you must notify the professor immediately. Make-up exams are only given 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, so forth).

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

### **Health/Wellness:**

While this course grades attendance, health is a necessary precondition to learning. Thus, if you are sick, please inform the professor and take the necessary steps to fully recover. The professor is reasonable and will work with you. If you communicate and provide documentation of your medical absence, then the professor will excuse these absences. The only exception is the in-class simulations, as these cannot be replicated.

In addition, if you are experiencing issues or struggling with mental health, I suggest you contact [Counseling Services](#) at the university. This service is free to all currently enrolled students. In addition, this office offers additional [groups](#) that can support you.

### **Academic Integrity:**

This course does 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). I address violations of academic integrity in compliance with the procedures laid out in JSU's [student handbook](#) (see page 97). You can learn more about academic dishonesty [here](#).

### **Campus Resources for Writing:**

The Writing Center offers several free in-person and online services including writing and digital writing consultations, virtual presentation audiences, ESL conversation partners, and special-topics workshops for all JSU faculty, staff, and students. A team of undergraduate and graduate consultants are trained to assist with academic, personal, and professional writing. Appointments can be scheduled through the Navigate app. For more information, visit [here](#).

### **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 them at (256) 782-8838, [veterans@jsu.edu](mailto: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 class to discuss the class attendance policy. I may make accommodations for this absence or suggest that you take the course at another time.

### **Accommodations:**

Jacksonville State University is committed to creating an inclusive learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body. If you are currently experiencing or anticipate that you will have any barriers to learning in this course, please feel welcome to discuss your concerns with me.

It is my goal to create a learning experience that is as accessible as possible. If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, that may have some impact on your work in this course and for which you may require academic adjustments or accommodations, please work with a staff member in [Disability Resources](#) so that accommodations can be considered. Students that receive accommodation letters, or Individualized Post-Secondary Plans (IPPs) should meet with me to discuss the provisions of your accommodations as early in the semester as possible.

You can find more information about the Office of Disability Resources on the [web](#) or by visiting the Student Success Center on the 2nd Floor of the Houston Cole Library.

You may also call (256) 782-8380 or email at [disabilityresources@jsu.edu](mailto:disabilityresources@jsu.edu). All discussions will remain confidential.

### **Student Notifications:**

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

### **Title IX:**

JSU 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 <http://www.jsu.edu/titleix>.

### **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](mailto:dmjames@jsu.edu).

### **Withdraws:**

Please be advised, the last date to withdraw from the course without academic penalty is Friday, November 11. There are other important dates regarding withdrawing from the course concerning refunding your tuition and if you receive an academic penalty, which you can find [here](#). If you choose to stop attending the course, it is your responsibility to withdraw from the course. If you do not withdraw from the course, the professor will enter the grade you have earned as your final grade.

### **E-mail Policy:**

I will do my best to respond to all e-mails within 24 hours. **All e-mails that can be answered via the syllabus will receive the response: "Please refer to your syllabus." and a picture of Alf.**

To ensure you have read the syllabus prior to e-mailing me, the first e-mail you send me must include a picture of a **platypus**. If your first e-mail does not have a picture of a platypus, 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.

To help response time, please include an appropriate subject line in your e-mail. Furthermore, please take time to construct a formal e-mail with proper etiquette and language. **E-mails constructed in a manner like, "Yo, Mrs B i will b submitting the thing late 2day" or using emojis to represent words/ideas will receive the response, "Please refer to your syllabus." and a picture of Godzilla.**

**COVID-19 Statement:**

To protect the health and safety of all employees, visitors, and students during the COVID-19 pandemic, Jacksonville State University publishes its policies [here](#).

Currently, masking requirements in classrooms is optional for students. [Empirical evidence](#) shows that to contain the virus during the [length](#) of our class session, assuming some individuals are unmasked, you will need an N95 mask. The university continues to offer free surgical masks. It is suggested that students get vaccinated, invest in N95 masks, or double mask to protect themselves. There are no special accommodations that will be provided if a student misses class due to COVID-19.

**How to be Successful in this Class:**

The best way to be successful is to be prepared. Being prepared means reading the entire assignment carefully and, most likely, rereading 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*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>
R-8/25	Introduction	<b>NO READING</b>
<b>Do Human Rights Exist?</b>		
T-8/30	Conceptual Origins of Human Rights	<b>PHR:</b> 7-24
R-9/2	The International Regime	<b>PHR:</b> 24-39
T-9/6	Realism (Pragmatism) or Liberalism (Black Letter Law)?	Canvas (see appendix below)
R-9/8	Norms	JSTOR (see appendix below)
T-9/13	State Responsibilities	<b>PHR:</b> 41-56
R-9/15	Contested Responsibilities	<b>PHR:</b> 56-69
<b>Why Do States Violate Human Rights?</b>		
T-9/20	Measuring and Studying Human Rights	<b>PHR:</b> 103-125
R-9/22	Patterns, Trends, and Democracy	<b>PHR:</b> 103-125 & JSTOR (see appendix below)
T-9/27	Rights with Responsibilities (Torture)	<b>PHR:</b> 71-81
R-9/29	In-Class Simulation	Canvas (see appendix below)
T-10/4	Film & Discussion	<b>NO READING</b>
R-10/6	Film & Discussion	<b>NO READING</b>
T-10/11	Rights with Responsibilities (more)	<b>PHR:</b> 81-99
R-10/13	Catch-Up Day & Review	<b>NO READING</b>
T-10/18	<b>Exam 1</b>	<b>NO READING</b>
R-10/20	Why are Human Rights Violated?	<b>PHR:</b> 127-144
T-10/25	Why are Human Rights Violated?	<b>PHR:</b> 145-161
R-10/27	Government Killing: History, Causes, Patterns, and Trends	JSTOR (see appendix below)
T-11/1	In-Class Simulation	<b>READING TBD</b>
<b>How Are Human Rights Protected?</b>		
R-11/3	Intervening to Protect Human Rights	<b>PHR:</b> 165-185
T-11/8	The Responsibility to Protect & Naming and Shaming	<b>PHR:</b> 185-195 JSTOR (see appendix below)
R-11/10	Rebuilding Society in the Aftermath	<b>PHR:</b> 197-213
T-11/15	Rebuilding Society in the Aftermath	<b>PHR:</b> 213-223
R-11/17	Towards the Future	<b>PHR:</b> 226-228 JSTOR (see appendix below)

T & R-11/22 & 24	<b>Thanksgiving Break</b> (learn more <a href="#">here</a> )	<b>NO READING</b>
T-11/29	Film & Discussion	<b>NO READING</b>
R-12/1	Film & Discussion	<b>NO READING</b>
T-12/6	Reflection & Review	<b>NO READING</b>
<b>T-12/8</b>	<b>Exam 2 (10:00 AM - 12:00 PM)</b>	<b>NO READING</b>

**Reading Appendix:**

9/6

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

9/8

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

9/22

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.

9/29

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](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).

10/27

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.

11/8

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.**