

POLI 498 – Capstone Seminar: Human Rights
Spring 2022
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 5:00-6:15 PM
In person in CBB 261 and simultaneously via Zoom

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Student Hours: Tuesdays 12-1 PM & Fridays 2-3 PM, and by appointment

Course Description

The idea of human rights is both ancient and quintessentially modern. It has implications for all levels of human society from the individual to global politics. This capstone course for political science majors will examine the question of human rights from various angles. We will begin by interrogating the concept of human rights, considering its various philosophical origins and historical development. We will then turn to the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), considered by many to be the foundational document of the modern human rights era. For the remainder of the course, we will examine diverse human rights issues and efforts to protect and guarantee human rights both domestically and internationally. Our current national reckoning with race makes the topic of systemic racism and racial justice an important place to start. We will endeavor to understand the protests and conflicts that erupted in the wake of the police killing of George Floyd into broader historical perspective, one that stretches back to slavery. We will read and watch works by prominent contemporary African Americans that speak directly to the impact that the racial caste system in this country has and continues to have on our society. At the international level we will examine on the global refugee and migrant crisis as a humanitarian issue. We will consider this unfolding human drama and state responses to it from a human rights perspective. After that, we will turn to the grave topic of genocide and mass atrocity. We will study the case of the Rwandan genocide and how the international community failed to prevent that tragedy. We will consider domestic and international efforts at justice and reconciliation in the wake of such horrific crimes, including the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC). In addition to our readings and discussions of these topics, students will choose a topic to research for their capstone paper. Finally, there will be activities designed to help you prepare for your post-college transition into the workforce or post-graduate education.

Course Learning Objectives - *Students will...*

- Deepen their understanding of the concept of human rights and how it came to be by examining the historical precedents and events that laid the foundation for its emergence.
- Explore and become familiar with a variety of contemporary human rights issues
- Develop their own positions on key human rights issues and be able to support them with reasoned arguments and evidence.
- Employ advanced-level analytical skills to analyze, interpret, and critique important work on this topic. Students will be expected to identify central arguments in the assigned readings, raise questions about the texts, and consider the strengths and weaknesses of arguments and proposals based on evidence and logic.
- Integrate knowledge, skills, and experiences from political science to come up with an interesting research question on a human rights topic and then explore that question in an extended paper and oral presentation.
- Create a classroom community that allows for creative, respectful, and wide-ranging discussion of complex ideas and problems, thereby developing skills in democratic discourse, debate, and analytical reasoning.
- Prepare a resume and job cover letter and become familiar with resources that will help them figure out their next steps after graduating from college.

Assigned Texts

Required Texts Available for Purchase at the UWSP Bookstore

- Andrew Clapham. *Human Rights: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Reece Jones. *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move*. Verso, 2017.
- Ta-Nehisi Coates. *Between the World and Me*. One World, 2015.

E-reserves

- All other readings and assigned materials are available on Canvas e-Reserves.

Course Requirements and Grading

Your grade will be based on your performance in the following areas:

Attendance and Participation	25%
Current Event Presentation (1)	2%
Leading Class Discussion (1)	8%
Career Exploration/Resume Assignment (2)	10%
Topic Proposal	2%
Outline and Expanded Bibliography	5%
First Draft of Research Paper & Peer Editing	8%
Research Paper	30%
Research Paper Presentation	10%
TOTAL	100%

Attendance and Participation – In-person and Flex Sections

As a capstone senior seminar, this course assumes that students are well versed in various aspects of political science and have developed the requisite skills in theoretical and empirical analysis to engage with sophisticated material without an inordinate amount of guidance or orientation from the professor. As a capstone experience, this course will function similarly to a graduate-level seminar. This means that instead of the professor lecturing, most class time will be spent discussing the assigned materials for that day. All students are expected to contribute to these discussions. Consequently, it is vitally important that students come to class having completed the assigned readings or watched any films assigned for that day. Before coming to class, students should reflect on the topic for that day and jot down comments and questions to contribute to the day’s discussion. There are various ways to contribute to class discussion, including answering questions, posing questions, listening attentively to others, and taking notes. Additionally, each student will take responsibility for leading a class once during the semester.

Obviously, a student cannot contribute if they are not present, so regular attendance is very important. Students are expected to attend all class sessions to the extent possible. However, ***due to Covid-19, if you are at all symptomatic, do not come to class***. Feel free to take advantage of the flex section to attend class via Zoom. I also ask that you communicate with me and let me know what is going on. All students will be allowed 2 unexcused absences. Absences for more than **two** classes will result in a lowering of your attendance and participation grade; **if you miss more than six classes during the semester, you will receive an “F” for Attendance and Participation**. This means that you could receive anywhere from 60-0% of the total possible 25 points for Attendance and Participation and risk failing the course.

Career Preparation Assignments

During the semester we will set aside some time to work on materials that will be useful for the transition from college to work or graduate school. Three class sessions are set aside to help you prepare a professional resume and a draft of a cover letter. These assignments will count for 10% of your course grade.

Current Events Presentations

We will begin most classes by discussing a story in the news related to human rights. Once during the semester each student will make a brief presentation on an article of interest related to this topic. Students will sign up for a day to do their current event presentation at the beginning of the semester. Current event presentations will not be graded; so long as a student completes the presentation, they will earn full credit. This presentation counts for 2% of the final grade. Recommended sources include, but are not limited to: *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *Slate*, *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker*, *Foreign Affairs*.

I encourage all students to get in the habit of following the news. A wonderful way to do this, even when you do not have much time, is to listen to the daily news programs on National Public Radio (NPR). They will keep you up to date on current events and important issues, both domestic and international. You can hear NPR news on Wisconsin Public Radio, which has two local radio stations: The Ideas Network at 99.1 FM and News and Classical at 90.9 FM. You can also listen live and access podcasts of previous shows at www.wpr.org.

I also recommend the daily news program, Democracy Now! for excellent and critical coverage of national and world events from a progressive, non-mainstream perspective. This television news program is broadcast weekday mornings and can be heard anytime online at: www.democracynow.org

There are many terrific podcasts that can help you learn about and keep up with the news. One that I recommend for delving deeper into top news stories is “The Daily”, which is produced by the *New York Times* and is available for free on Apple Podcasts and other platforms.

Leading Class Discussion

Once during the semester each student will lead class for the day. In preparation, the student will put together an outline of key points from the assigned reading(s) and/or film, identify topics that might have been left hanging from the previous class, and draw up a list of discussion questions on the reading and the topic for that day/week. The student should prepare a handout for class and post it to Canvas by noon on the day the student will be leading class. The student leader for that day will initiate and lead the discussion with the assistance (if need be) of the professor. Students will be graded on their preparation and skill in helping guide the discussion.

Paper Project and Presentations

The major written assignment is a 14-18 page-research paper on a topic of the student’s choosing. Detailed instructions, guidelines, and topic suggestions will be provided early in the semester. There are several assignments designed to assist you in making progress on your research and writing over the course of the semester; these are also opportunities for me and your peers to give you timely feedback that will hopefully improve your final paper. One of these assignments will be to attend a peer-editing session on first drafts. For these sessions, students will be divided into groups of three and will meet with me for an hour to discuss and give feedback on their drafts. At the end of the semester all students will formally present their research papers to the class. Student paper presentations will take place during the last week of class and on our designated final exam day. Students will be strongly encouraged to present their research during the COLS Undergraduate Research Symposium to be held on Friday, May 6.

The Writing Lab

The Writing Lab in the Tutoring-Learning Center (TLC) offers free one-on-one help with papers for any class. The Writing Lab consultants are successful UWSP students who can discuss any type of writing at any stage of the drafting process; including brainstorming, outlining, and research or citations. They work with experienced writers as well as struggling writers; we believe that everyone benefits from discussions about their writing. If you have questions or would like to make an appointment, please contact the TLC via email (tlctutor@uwsp.edu) or phone (715-346-3568).

Privacy and Recordings

Lecture materials, Zoom classes, and recordings for POLI 498 are protected intellectual property at UW-Stevens Point. Students in this course may use the materials and recordings for their personal use related to participation in this class. Students may also take notes solely for their personal use. If a lecture is not already recorded, you are not authorized to record my lectures or class discussions without my permission unless you are considered by the university to be a qualified student with a disability requiring accommodation. [Regent Policy Document 4-1] ***Students may not copy or share lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including posting on internet sites or selling to commercial entities.*** Students are also prohibited from providing or selling their personal notes to anyone else or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the instructor's express written permission. Unauthorized use of these copyrighted lecture materials and recordings constitutes copyright infringement and may be addressed under the university's policies, UWS Chapters 14 and 17, governing student academic and non-academic misconduct.

Academic Integrity and Turnitin.com

All students are expected to abide by the guidelines for academic integrity contained in the UW System Administrative Code. As a student it behooves you to be well acquainted with these guidelines and to understand clearly what constitutes plagiarism, as violations can result in severe consequences. We will use the plagiarism detection program, Turnitin.com, via Canvas. You will upload all your written work to Canvas, which will run your papers through the Turnitin.com database to check for plagiarism.

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

Week 1 – Introduction to the Course and Human Rights

1/25 – Introduction to course & each other

No assigned readings

1/27 - Historical Development of Rights

Reading: Clapham, Ch. 1 “Looking at Rights” (entire); Ch. 2 “Historical Development and Contemporary Concerns” (pp. 27-38 ending at “Prosecution of International Crimes)

Week 2 – Concept of Human Rights

2/1 – The Concept of Human Rights

Reading: Jack Donnelly. *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice, Third Edition.* Cornell University Press, 2013. Ch. 1, “The Concept of Human Rights”. (e-Reserves)

2/3 – Research Tools and Sources

Week 3 – Universal Declaration of Human Rights

2/7 – DUE: RESEARCH PAPER TOPIC PROPOSAL – Upload to Canvas by 5PM

2/8 – The Drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Readings: Glendon, Preface (xv-xxi); Ch. 1 “The Longing for Freedom” (pp. 3-20); Ch. 4 “Every Conceivable Right” (pp. 53-72); and Ch. 5 “A Philosophical Investigation” (pp. 73-78). (e-Reserves)

2/10 – Examining the Document itself

Readings:

- Glendon, Ch. 10 “The Declaration of Interdependence” (pp. 173-191). (e-Reserves)
- Jack Donnelly. *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice, Third Edition.* Cornell University Press, 2013. Ch. 2 “The Universal Declaration Model” (pp. 24-39) (e-Reserves)

Week 4 – Universality

2/15 - The Question of Universality

Readings:

- Glendon, Ch. 12, “Universality Under Siege” (pp. 221-233). (e-Reserves)
- Jack Donnelly. *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice, Third Edition*. Cornell University Press, 2013. Ch. 6, “The Relative Universality of Human Rights” (pp. 93-105) (e-Reserves)

2/17 – Resume Writing Tutorial

Week 5 – Systemic Racism in the United States

2/22 – Resume Peer Review

2/24 - From Slavery to Mass Incarceration: A Long History of Racial Injustice

Reading: Nikole Hannah-Jones. “Our democracy’s founding ideas were false when they were written. Black Americans have fought to make them true.” 1619 Project, *New York Times*, August 14, 2019.

Watch: 13th, directed by Ava DuVernay, 2016 (100 mins.) Streaming for free on Netflix.

Week 6 – The Current Struggle for Racial Justice in America

3/1 - The Black Experience in America through Coates’s Eyes

Reading: Ta-Nehisi Coates. *Between the World and Me*. Part I, pp. 5-71.

3/3 - Police Violence and the Black Lives Matter Movement Today

Readings:

- Ta-Nehisi Coates. *Between the World and Me*. Part II & III, pp. 73-152.
- Other readings TBA.

Week 7 – The Global Migration Crisis

3/7 – DUE: OUTLINE AND EXPANDED BIBLIOGRAPHY – Upload to Canvas by 5PM

3/8 – Migration and the EU

Reading: Reece Jones. *Violent Borders*, Introduction and Ch. 1 “The European Union: The World’s Deadliest Border” (pp. 1-28)

Highly Recommended: Human Flow, 2017 documentary by Ai Weiwei on global migration crisis.

3/10 – Crisis at the U.S.-Mexican Border

Readings:

- Reece Jones. *Violent Borders*, Ch. 2 “The U.S.-Mexico Border: The Rise of a Militarized Zone”; and Ch. 3 “The Global Border Regime” (pp. 29-69)
- Suketu Mehta. “Why Should Immigrants ‘Respect Our Borders’? The West Never Respected Theirs.” *New York Times*, June 7, 2019. (e-Reserves)

Week 8 - Migration as a Human Right

3/15 – The Future of Migration and Human Rights

Reading: Reece Jones. *Violent Borders*, Ch. 7 “Borders, Climate Change, and the Environment”; and Conclusion (pp. 140-180)

3/17 – Global Economy and Migration – **Class will be held Virtually Via Zoom**

Reading: Reece Jones. *Violent Borders*, Ch. 4 “The Global Poor” (pp. 70-88); and Ch. 6 “Bounding Wages Goods and Workers” (pp. 119-139)

March 19-27 – Spring Break – Enjoy!!!

Week 9 – Genocide & the International Community

3/29 – Defining Genocide & Case Study of Rwanda

Reading: Adam Jones. *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*. Routledge, 2017. Ch. 1 “The Origins of Genocide” (Read pp. 11-22, starting with the section titled “Naming Genocide” and ending at “Bounding Genocide”, you can skip Box 1.3 on pp. 19 & 20); & Ch. 9 “Genocide in Africa’s Great Lakes Region” (Read pp. 471-487). (e-Reserves)

Highly Recommended: Hotel Rwanda, 2005 feature film about the Rwandan genocide.

3/31 – Right to Protect

Reading: Daniel P.L. Chong. *Debating Human Rights*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2014. Ch. 5 “Does the International Community Have a ‘Responsibility to Protect?’” (pp. 65-78). (e-Reserves)

Week 10 – Peer-Editing Workshops

4/3 – DUE: FIRST DRAFT OF RESEARCH PAPER AND ABSTRACT – Upload to Canvas by 5PM

4/5 – *Peer-editing workshops – regular class meetings cancelled*

4/7 – *Peer-editing workshops – regular class meetings cancelled*

Week 11 – Free Week to Work Independently on Research Project

Note: This week Professor Collins will be out of town and unavailable as she will be attending the National Model UN Conference in New York City.

4/12 – *No class meeting*

4/14 – *No class meeting*

4/15 – Submission deadline for COLS Undergraduate Research Symposium

Week 12 – Dealing with the Legacies of Genocide

4/19 – Seeking justice and reconciliation

Reading: Adam Jones. *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction, Third Edition*. Routledge, 2017. Ch. 15 “Justice, Truth, and Redress”. Read pp. 697-737, but you can skip the following sections: “The Mixed Tribunals: Cambodia and Sierra Leone pp. 714-715; “The Pinochet Case” pp. 718-720, “International Citizens’ Tribunals” and “Truth and Reconciliation pp. 723-731, pick up again with Box 15.4 on Rwanda and read to the end of the chapter.). (e-Reserves)

4/21 – The International Criminal Court

Watch: “The Reckoning: The Battle for the International Criminal Court.” Available streaming on Kanopy. Link is on Canvas. (Running Time: 100 minutes)

Reading: Daniel P.L. Chong. *Debating Human Rights*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2014. Ch. 6 “Should the United States Join the International Criminal Court?” (pp. 81-93) (e-Reserves).

Week 13 – Socio-economic Rights

4/26 – Socio-economic rights

Readings:

- Clapham, Ch. 7 “Food, education, health, housing, and work.” (pp. 122-139)
- Daniel P.L. Chong. *Debating Human Rights*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2014. Ch. 12 “Are Food, Housing, and Health Care Valid Human Rights?” (pp. 175-186). (e-Reserves)
- Jacey Fortin. “‘Access to Literacy’ is not a Constitutional Right, Judge in Detroit Rules”. *The New York Times*, July 4, 2018. (e-Reserves)

4/28 - Job application cover letter module via Canvas – *No class meeting*

Week 14 – Conclusions

5/3 - Discrimination & Sexism

Readings:

- Clapham, Ch. 8 “Discrimination and equality.” (pp. 140-152)
- Eric Bonds. *Social Problems: A Human Rights Perspective*. Routledge, 2015. Ch. V “Sexism and the Right to Bodily Integrity.” (pp. 41-50) (e-Reserves)

5/5 – The State of Human Rights Today

Readings:

- Clapham, Final Remarks (pp. 161-165).
- Glendon, Epilogue “The Declaration Today” (pp. 235-241). (e-Reserves)
- David Rieff. “The End of Human Rights? Learning from the Failure of the Responsibility to Protect and the International Criminal Court.” *Foreign Policy*, Issue 228, April 1, 2018 (e-Reserves).

5/6 – Undergraduate Research Symposium

Week 15 – Student Paper Presentations

5/10 – Student Paper Presentations

5/12 – Student Paper Presentations

Finals Week

Thursday May 19 – 5:00-7:00 PM - Student Paper Presentations

Friday May 20 - RESEARCH PAPERS DUE - Upload to Canvas by 5pm