

POLI 498 – Capstone Seminar: Human Rights

Fall 2020

In-person Track: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 3:30-4:45 PM, CCC 213

Online Track: Asynchronous Assignments via Canvas

Professor Jennifer Collins

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Student Hours (Virtually via Zoom; link is on Canvas):

Mon. 2-3 PM, Tues. 9-10 AM, & Thurs. 12 noon – 1 PM, or 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 put the current protests and the conflicts that have 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 disaster. 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 some 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 or online 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.

Communication in the Major Learning Objectives

This course is one of two in the Political Science major that together meet a student's GEP requirement for Communication in the Major. As such, this course seeks to meet the following learning objectives:

- Apply discipline-specific standards of oral and written communication to compose an articulate, grammatically correct, and organized presentation/piece of writing with properly documented and supported ideas, evidence, and information suitable to the topic, purpose, and audience.
- Critique their own and others' writing/oral presentations to provide effective and useful feedback to improve their communication skills.

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 are available on Canvas e-Reserves.

Course Modalities for Covid-19

This course will offer students two distinct pathways -- a face-to-face modality and an asynchronous modality. At the beginning of the semester students will indicate which of the two modalities they plan to follow. The expectation is that this will be their modality for the semester, however, there will be flexibility between the two modalities in response to student needs and circumstances that may arise as a result of the pandemic. For example, if a student in the face-to-face modality becomes sick or must go into isolation, they will then switch to the online modality. Similarly, if you have signed up for the online modality, but would like to switch to face-to-face, let me know and we can figure out if this can be arranged. Key to this working will be regular communication; I will do my best to stay in touch with each of you, but you must also take responsibility for communicating with me and letting me know when and if you are facing circumstances that require changes or adjustments to how you are working in the course.

Remember also, that after Thanksgiving all instruction will go online. Our last 2 weeks of class will be held via Zoom. Students who have been taking the course asynchronously online are encouraged after Thanksgiving break to join the class synchronously via Zoom. If this is not possible, please let me know and we can work out alternatives for this period.

Below you will see the course requirements for each modality. You will see that I have created equivalencies in the online course for each of the graded components of the face-to-face class. That way it should be easy for students to opt into the online modality if the need should arise.

Course Requirements and Grading for *Face-to-Face Modality*

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%
Reading Annotations (2)	10%
Career Exploration/Resume Assignment (2)	10%
First Draft of Research Paper & Peer Editing	5%

Research Paper	30%
Research Paper Presentation	10%
TOTAL	100%

Course Requirements and Grading for *Online Asynchronous Modality*

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

Participation in online discussion or reaction papers to assigned readings	25%
Participation in Current Event Discussion Board	2%
Leading Class Discussion via Zoom or Alternative Assignment (TBD)	8%
Reading Annotations (2)	10%
Career Exploration/Resume Assignments (2)	10%
First Draft of Research Paper & Peer Editing	5%
Research Paper	30%
Research Paper Presentation	10%
TOTAL	100%

Attendance and Participation - Face-to-Face and Online

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.*** If you have to miss class, whether for medical or other reasons, you are expected to make up the missed class by completing the assignment for the online modality – whether that is participation in a discussion board or a reaction paper on the assigned readings and/or films. I also ask that you communicate with me and let me know what is going on. You can do so by sending me a message, preferably via Canvas Inbox. All students will be allowed 2 unexcused absences or missed online assignments. Absences and missed assignments for more than **two** classes will result in a lowering of your attendance and participation grade; **if you miss more than six classes and/or online assignments 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.

Instructions for Online Students

You will follow the same course schedule as the students in the face-to-face section and should prepare each week accordingly, by doing the reading, taking notes, etc. However, in lieu of attending and participating in class, you will either participate in an asynchronous online discussion on the readings assigned for that day or you will write a reaction paper. I will set up a discussion board where online

students can post and engage with each other on Canvas. You are expected to contribute to an online discussion or post a reaction paper for each day for which there are assigned readings, but there will be flexibility in terms of when you post; in other words, you will not be limited to the scheduled time class is in session. All posts and reaction papers for that week's assigned readings must be completed by the end of the week. You will get completion points for each of these assignments and these will count as your attendance points.

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, he/she 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*.

Instructions for Online Students

In lieu of an in-class presentation on current events, you will be expected to share a news story on the Current Events Discussion Board. You should provide a link to the story, offer a brief description and provide some thoughtful commentary on what is going on and how you see it relating to human rights. Other students are encouraged to respond to and comment on these stories.

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.

Instructions for Online Students

All instruction will go online after Thanksgiving. If possible, I encourage those students who have been taking the course online asynchronously up to that point to join the virtual Zoom classes for the last two weeks of the semester. I will schedule online students to lead class discussion for one of these class sessions, or if you prefer, for a class earlier in the semester that we might schedule via Zoom. If you are unable to schedule such a class time with me, then I will work with you to create an alternative assignment.

Reading Annotations

Over the course of the semester each student will write two (2) Reading Annotations on assigned readings, which will then be posted to the discussion board so that all students can access them. Students will sign-up to prepare annotations for specific dates at the start of the semester. Reading Annotations should be 1 single-spaced page in length and *must be posted to Canvas by 9 AM on the day for which the reading is assigned*. Together these two annotations will count for 10% of your grade. Face-to-face and online students will both need to sign-up for and complete two annotations. Instructions for how to do these will be distributed at the start of the semester.

Career Exploration Assignments

During the semester we will set aside time for talking about the post-college transition to work and/or graduate school and working on things like resumes and job cover letters. Two class sessions will be used for Canvas assignments which together will count for 10% of your course grade. All students, whether in the face-to-face or online cohorts will be responsible for completing these assignments.

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. During the first half of the semester students will submit paper proposals, which I will review and give feedback on.

We will also hold peer-editing sessions to provide feedback on first drafts. For the peer-editing 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. All peer review sessions will be held via Zoom with participation by both face-to-face and online students.

At the end of the semester all students will formally present their research papers via Zoom to the class. Student paper presentations will take place during the last week of class and on our designated final exam day.

Instructions for Online Students

You will be assigned to a Zoom peer-editing group along with the rest of the class. There will be choices of meeting times, so everyone should be able to find a time that fits their schedule.

For the final paper presentations, asynchronous online students are strongly encouraged to present their work via Zoom along with the face-to-face students. If this is not possible, then they will be permitted to prepare a somewhat longer recorded video presentation on their paper.

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.

- **Writing Lab are currently being held virtually via Zoom**
- **By appointment or short notice times available**
- **You are able to send us your paper for revision via [an online form \(found here\)](#)**
- **All services in the Writing Lab are free**

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 - Introductions

9/3 – Introduction to course & each other

No assigned readings

Week 2 – Introducing Human Rights

9/8 – 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)

9/10 – 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)

Week 3 – UDHR

9/15 – 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)

9/17 – 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; Alumni Roundtable

9/22 – 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)

9/24 – Alumni Roundtable on Post-College Transition – Date is tentative. Meeting via Zoom.

9/25 – DUE RESEARCH PAPER TOPIC PROPOSAL – Upload to Canvas by 5PM

Week 5 – Systemic Racism in the United States

9/29 - 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.

10/1 - The Black Experience in America through Coates’s Eyes

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

Week 6 – The Current Struggle for Racial Justice in America; Socio-economic Rights

10/6 - Police Violence and the Black Lives Matter Movement Today

Readings:

- Ta-Nehisi Coates. *Between the World and Me*. Part II & III, pp. 73-152.
- Michelle Alexander. “Opinion: America This is Your Chance.” *New York Times*, June 8, 2020.

10/8 - Resume Module via Canvas - *No class meeting*

Week 7 – The Global Migration Crisis

10/13 – 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.

10/15 – 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

10/20 – 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)

10/22 – Global Economy and Migration

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

Week 9 – Genocide & the International Community

10/27 – Defining Genocide & Case Study of Rwanda

Reading: Adam Jones. *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*. Routledge, 2017. Ch. 1 “The Origins of Genocide” (pp. 3-22); & Ch. 9 “Genocide in Africa’s Great Lakes Region” (pp. 470-87). (e-Reserves)

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

10/29 – 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 – Election Day, Research, and Writing

11/3 – Election Day – NO CLASS – Go Vote!!!

11/5 - *Free day to work on your first drafts*

Week 11 – Peer-Editing Workshops

11/9 – FIRST DRAFT OF RESEARCH PAPER DUE – Upload to Canvas by 5PM

11/10 - 12 - Peer-editing workshops – regular class meetings cancelled

11/12 - Job application cover letter module via Canvas – *No class meeting*

Week 12 – Dealing with the Legacies of Genocide

11/17 - Seeking justice and reconciliation

Reading: Adam Jones. *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction, Third Edition*. Routledge, 2017. Ch. 15 “Justice, Truth, and Redress” (pp. 697-737, Note: You can skip the following sections: The Pinochet Case, pp. 718-720, and Box 15.3, pp. 726-730). (e-Reserves)

11/19 - 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 & Thanksgiving Break

11/24 – 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)

11/26-11/29 – Thanksgiving Break! Enjoy!!!

Week 14 – Conclusions - Virtual Via Zoom

12/1 - 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)

12/3 – 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).

Week 15 – Student Paper Presentations - Virtual Via Zoom

12/7 – RESEARCH PAPERS DUE - Upload to Canvas by 5pm

12/8 – Student Paper Presentations

12/10 – Student Paper Presentations

Finals Week – Tues., December 15th, 12:30-2:30 PM, - Student Paper Presentations - Virtual Via Zoom

