

Hist 4994W-003– The United States and Human Rights

BOUSA105, Th 2:00PM - 4:30

Professor Brad Simpson, 213 Wood Hall

Bradley.simpson@uconn.edu

Course Description and Objectives: This class will examine human rights in modern international history. It will explore the emergence and spread of human rights ideas, institutions, debates and activism from historical, philosophical, legal, and cultural perspectives. Together we will consider the roots of human rights ideas in political theory and philosophy in the pre-20th century period, the emergence of human rights as a transnational idea in the last century, the institutionalization of human rights norms in the United Nations and other international bodies, debates over the universality of human rights, human rights and U.S. foreign policy and human rights in the context of processes of ‘globalization.’

This is a research seminar, and so the focus of the course will be on the researching and writing of a substantive paper, based on primary sources and engaging with relevant secondary literature, that expresses personal arguments on an important question in the history of human rights. In order to prepare for this project, each student will write a series of brief arguments and responses to arguments of other scholars.

Readings and such: You will want to purchase:

Bringing Human Rights Home: A History of Human Rights in the United States. Edited by Cynthia Soohoo, Catherine Albisa, and Martha F. Davis

Sam Moyn, *the Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*

Akira Iriye, Ed. *The Human Rights Revolution An International History*

Any other readings and documents will be available on blackboard and can be accessed by going to the "Course Documents" section and clicking on each week's readings. The readings for this course start out heavy and taper over the course of the semester as you work more on your paper. The goal of the readings is to familiarize you with a wide range of issues and approaches, not necessarily to master content, so you can skim as you need, though you need to read enough to effectively participate in discussion.

Learning Opportunities:

This will be a discussion-based class. Class participants will be responsible for coming to class prepared to discuss each week's readings and engage in conversation with colleagues. At several points early in the semester we will write brief responses to weekly readings. Finally, over the course of the semester, students will research and write a substantial paper (15 pages) exploring a question of interest in the history of the US engagement with human rights.

Class Project: You need to begin conceptualizing and researching your paper at the start of the semester in order to bring it to successful fruition by the end. I have provided a few examples of accessible materials you may want to consult in your research on the project page. I also encourage you to consult with me or with a research librarian about specific sources on your topic. The key is to get out and start digging early in the quarter.

Writing: Full requirements for the final paper will be detailed soon. Here I will simply suggest that you work steadily throughout the semester on committing your thoughts to writing. Your paper is the centerpiece of this course and it is expected to be a polished piece of work, so please DO NOT leave it to the last minute!

Evaluation:

The final grade will assess students' ability--as reflected in written and oral work--to draw and defend historical conclusions, to think historically, and to apply that thinking to the issues raised in the course, as well as to their own writing. This will break down roughly along these lines:

Short essays (including preliminary paper steps): 25%

Class participation: 25%

Class project (Rough and Final Drafts): 50%

SCHEDULE

Week 1 Jan 22 Course introduction –

What are Human Rights? Where do they come from? Why do people abuse them?

Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, Introduction and Ch. 1

John Sheestack, *Philosophical Foundations of Human Rights* (Blackboard)

Mitchell, *Economic and Political Explanations of Human Rights Abuses* (Blackboard)

Blanton, Shannon Lindsey. "Instruments of Security or Tools of Repression? Arms Imports and Human Rights Conditions in Developing Countries." *Journal of Peace Research* 36, no. 2 (March 1, 1999): 233–44. (Blackboard)

Week 2 Jan 29 Human Rights as History – Thinking about sources

RESEARCH AT THE DODD CENTER – meet at Dodd Center

Kenneth Cmiel, "The Recent History of Human Rights," *The American Historical Review* 109, no. 1 (February 2004), 117-135

Brad Simpson "Bringing the Non-State Back in: Human Rights and Terrorism since 1945," in Michael Hogan and Frank Costigliola, eds., *America in the World: the Historiography of*

American Foreign Relations since 1945 (Revised Edition, Cambridge University Press: New York, 2014).

Week 3 Feb 5 – Ideas, Origins and the United Nations

Moyn, Chapter 2

Akira Iriye, Ed. *The Human Rights Revolution An International History*, Ch. 2-5, 15

Carol Anderson, "From Hope to Disillusion: African Americans, The United Nations and the Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1947," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 20, no. 4 (fall 1996): 531-563.

Week 4 Feb 12 Human Rights and Decolonization

Akira Iriye, Ed. *The Human Rights Revolution An International History*, Ch. 8

Brad Simpson, "[Self-Determination, Human Rights, and the End of Empire in the 1970s](#)," [Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development, Volume 4, Number 2, Summer 2013, pp. 239-260.](#)

<http://hhr.hypotheses.org/121> - please read the review by Jan Eckel and the two responses by Fabien Klose and Roland Burke at this site.

Simpson, Brad. "The United States and the Curious History of Self-Determination." *Diplomatic History* 36, no. 4 (2012): 675–694.

Week 5 – Feb 19 – Human Rights and Anti-Apartheid Activism – A Case Study

Derek Catsam, "Marching in the 'Dark City': Bus Boycotts in South Africa in the 1940s and the Limits and Promise of Comparative History," *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies* 8:3 (2007): 315;

David Hostetter, "'An International Alliance of People of All Nations Against Racism': Nonviolence and Solidarity in the Antiapartheid Activism of the American Committee on Africa, 1952–1961," *Peace & Change* 32:2 (April, 2007): 134-152;

Ryan Irwin, "Apartheid on Trial: South West Africa and the International Court of Justice, 1960–66," *The International History Review* 32:4 (2010): 619;

Simon Stevens, "From the Viewpoint of a Southern Governor': The Carter Administration and Apartheid, 1977-1981," *Diplomatic History*, forthcoming

Week 6 Feb 26– NGOs and Human Rights

Tom Buchanan, "'The Truth Will Set You Free': The Making of Amnesty International," *Journal of Contemporary History* 37, no. 4 (October 1, 2002): 575-597

Barbara Keys, "Anti-Torture Politics: Amnesty International, the Greek Junta, and the Origins of the Human Rights Movement in the United States, 1967-1970," in *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century: An International History*, eds. Petra Goedde, William Hitchcock, and Akira Iriye (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011)

Carl Bon Tempo, "From the Center-Right: Freedom House and Human Rights in the 1970s and 1980s," in Akira Iriye, Petra Goedde and William I. Hitchcock, Eds., *The Human Rights Revolution: An International History* (New York: Oxford UP, 2011)

Kenneth Cmiel, "The Emergence of Human Rights Politics in the United States," *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (December 1, 1999): 1231-1250

Week 7 March 5 Human Rights in the 1970s, part I

[Kathryn Sikkink](#), *Mixed Signals: U.S. Human Rights Policy And Latin America* (2004), 1-106

D. F. Schmitz and V. Walker, 'Jimmy Carter and the Foreign Policy of Human Rights: The Development of a Post-Cold War Foreign Policy', *Diplomatic History*, xxviii (2004), 113-43;

Barbara Keys, "Congress, Kissinger, and the Origins of Human Rights Diplomacy," *Diplomatic History* 34, no. 5 (November 1, 2010): 823-851

Week 8 March 12 – Human Rights Politics in the 1970s and 1980s

[Kathryn Sikkink](#), *Mixed Signals*, 106-180

Week 9 March 26 – Gender and Human Rights

Jocelyn Olcott, "Cold War Conflicts and Cheap Cabaret: Performing Politics at the 1975 United Nations International Women's Year Conference in Mexico City", *Gender and History*, vol. 22 no. 3 (November, 2010), pp. 733-754

Kelly J. Shannon, "The Right to Bodily Integrity: Women's Rights as Human Rights and the International Movement to End Female Genital Mutilation, 1970s-1990s,"

Allida Black, "Are Women 'Human'? The U.N. and the Struggle to Recognize Women's Rights as Human Rights," in Hitchcock, Iriye, Goedde, Eds., *The Human Rights Revolution*.

Quartaert, *Advocating Dignity*, 149-182

Week 10 April 2 Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – US Case Studies

Bringing Human Rights Home: A History of Human Rights in the United States, Chapter 1-5

Week 11 April 9

Week 12 April 16 – Rough Draft Due

Week 13 April 23 Student Presentations of Research

Week 14 April 30 Student Presentations of research

Monday May 4, Final Papers Due