

**POL412H1 F – Human Rights and International Relations
Fall 2020**

Time: Fridays, 10-12pm
Location: Myhal Centre, Room 380 (in-person)
BB Collaborate/Zoom (online-synchronous)

Instructor: David Zarnett
david.zarnett@utoronto.ca

Office hours: By appointment
Location: Phone, Zoom or BB Collaborate

Course Description:

For centuries, human rights, in one shape or another, have influenced the practice of global politics. This course examines this phenomenon in two main sections. In the first part of the course, we will examine how human rights claims have been used by state and non-state actors to pursue certain objectives, including empire building, war, democratization, great power balancing, as well as organizational and personal material self-interest. This section of the course will look at both historical and contemporary cases, including the rise of Islam and French colonialism in West Africa, civil war in Sudan, as well as the behaviour of Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

In the second part of the course we will examine some of the major controversies and debates surrounding human rights in global politics. Our discussion will focus on the following questions: Are contemporary human rights universal or are they just the most recent manifestation of Western imperialism? Is the use of military force to achieve humanitarian objectives ever justified? Should social movements look to international law to advance their struggle? Can we trust the empirical claims made by human rights NGOs and social movements? Have we made any human rights progress over the last few decades? And will human rights survive COVID-19 and the decline of the West?

Course Objectives:

This course has four main objectives:

1. To provide you with an opportunity to develop a deeper and nuanced understanding of what human rights are;
2. To provide you with an opportunity to develop a historically- and theoretically-informed account of the role that human rights plays in global politics;
3. To provide you with an opportunity to engage in a fair and open-minded way with some of the most pressing controversies surrounding human rights in global politics today;
4. To provide you with an opportunity to develop important transferable skills useful for a variety of different professions, including academia, advocacy, consulting, government and law, among others.

Marking Scheme & Course Requirements

Participation – 15%

Reading Presentation & Two-Page Memo – 15%

Analytical Essay #1 – 30% (due Week #7, October 23rd)

Analytical Essay #2 Pitch – 5% (due in weeks #9 & #11)

Analytical Essay #2 – 35% (due December 11th).

Participation (15%)

Class participation is an essential part of this course. You are expected to attend all classes having read and thought about the week's readings, and to be prepared to ask and answer questions about them. Additional ways to participate in this class include attending online office hours to speak with me about the course content and assignments.

Reading Presentation & Memo (15%)

You will present one (1) reading to the class. Your presentation will be approximately 4-5 minutes. In your presentation, you should address the following five (5) questions:

1. What is the main topic or issue that the reading addresses?
2. What is the reading's core argument? How is this argument developed or advanced?
3. What are at least three (3) key points from the article that your colleagues should keep in mind?
4. How does this article relate to some of the other readings and themes discussed in the course so far?
5. If you were teaching this class, would you assign this article to your students? Explain your decision.

In addition, you must also submit a two-page (double-spaced, normal margins, 12pt Times New Roman or Garamond font) memo that addresses the questions listed above, due on the date of the presentation. Your memo should be uploaded to Quercus in .doc or .docx format.

This assignment is designed to give you practical experience in public speaking and to help you improve your ability to condense a significant amount of material into a short, clearly written document.

Analytical Essay #1 (30%) – Due October 23rd

For this assignment, you will produce a 6-8 page(double-spaced, 12 pt. font) essay that answers the following question:

Has the idea of human rights been a force for good in global politics? Why or why not?

In answering this question, draw **only** on the course readings from weeks #1 - #6. This is not a research paper and you should not include any additional sources beyond what is stated in the syllabus. You may, however, draw on class lectures and discussions in your paper, cited appropriately. The purpose of this assignment is to encourage you to think carefully and critically about the course readings and material.

Additional information:

- Times New Roman or Garamond font, 12 point.
- Footnotes in the Chicago style (for details on this style see here: https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html)
- No bibliography needed
- Any content over 8 pages will not be read

Analytical Essay #2 Pitch – 5% (Due anytime between weeks #9 & #11).

For this assignment, you will present a short 5-minute pitch to me in which you outline your idea for your Analytical Essay #2 (see below for more information). In making your pitch, show that you have thought about and understood the question you are asking, have an idea of what you want to argue, and that you are developing some expertise. This assignment will give you practical experience in presenting an idea in a persuasive and compelling way.

Pitches will take place outside of class via BB Colloborate during weeks #9, #10, and #11. To schedule your pitch presentation, please email me.

Analytical Essay #2 (35%) – Due December 11th

For this assignment, you will produce an 8-10 page, double-spaced paper that answers ONE of the questions stated below. In answering your question, you must use at least 10 scholarly sources, including at least 5 readings from the syllabus. The purpose of this assignment is to have you to engage in a thoughtful and fair-minded way with a pressing controversy concerning human rights in global politics.

1. Are human rights universal or a form of Western imperialism?
2. Is armed humanitarian intervention ever justified?
3. Should social movements look to international law to advance their struggle?
4. Can we trust the empirical claims made by social movements and NGOs?
5. Have we made any human rights progress?
6. Can human rights survive COVID-19 and the decline of the West?

Additional information:

- Times New Roman or Garamond font, 12 point.
- Footnotes in the Chicago style (for details on this style see here: https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html)
- No bibliography needed
- Any content over 10 pages will not be read

Course Materials

There are no readings or textbooks that need to be purchased. Most of the readings are available online through the University of Toronto’s library catalogue. Others will be scanned and posted on Quercus under the section entitled “Pages.”

Assignment Submission & Turnitin:

All assignments that will be graded must be submitted on time via Quercus. Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for review of textual similarity and

detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

Late Penalties & Extensions:

The penalty for late assignments is 5% per day. If the assignment is not submitted within one week (7 days including the weekend) after the due date, a mark of zero will be assigned. If you become ill and it affects your ability to do your academic work, please feel free to come speak to me directly. Normally, you will be asked for medical documentation in support of your specific medical circumstances. The University's Verification of Student Illness or Injury (VOI) form is recommended because it indicates the impact and severity of the illness, while protecting your privacy about the details of the nature of the illness. You can submit a different form (like a letter from the doctor), as long as it is an original document, and it contains the same information as the VOI. For more information, please see

<http://www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca/> If you get a concussion, break your hand, or suffer some other acute injury, you should register with Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

Late work must also be submitted to me directly via Quercus AND email. Students are strongly advised to keep draft work and hard copies of their assignments until the marked assignments have been returned and grades posted online.

Re-Grading Policy

If you would like to challenge a grade, you will have to submit a one-page typed (single or double-spaced) document explaining in detail why a re-grade is necessary. This document MUST be submitted to me no sooner than 48 hours after the assignment has been returned to you and no later than one week after it has been returned. As the instructor, I reserve the right to reject this request. If I agree to re-grade the assignment, there is a chance your grade may be lower than the first grade you received.

Office Hours

Due to COVID-19, office hours will be done through appointment and held via BB Collaborate on Quercus or over the phone. If you would like to speak, please email me and we can set up a convenient time to connect.

Email Policy:

You can contact me anytime via email and I will get back to you within 24 hours from Monday to Friday. I will not be checking email on the weekend. While I am happy to correspond via email, please note that discussions via BB Collaborate or over the phone are often a more productive and efficient use of time.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:

The University and this course treat cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences.

Potential offences in papers and assignments include:

- using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement;
- submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor;
- making up sources or facts;
- obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment.

On tests and exams cheating includes:

- using or possessing unauthorized aids;
- looking at someone else's answers;
- misrepresenting your identity, or falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes.

If you have concerns about plagiarism, please come speak to me directly. As you prepare your analytical essays, please make sure to review this link for useful guidance:

<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>.

Accessibility:

I am committed to creating a course environment that is accessible for all students. If you require accommodation for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please feel free to discuss this with me and get in touch with Accessibility Services as soon as possible:

<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/accessibility-services/>

Harassment & Discrimination

The University of Toronto is a diverse community and as such is committed to providing an environment free of any form of harassment, misconduct, or discrimination. In this course, I seek to foster a civil, respectful, and open-minded climate in which we can all work together to develop a better understanding of key questions and debates through meaningful dialogue. As such, I expect all involved with this course to refrain from actions or behaviours that intimidate, humiliate, or demean persons or groups or that undermine their security or self-esteem based on traits related to race, religion, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, disability, receipt of public assistance or record of offences.

Mental Health & Wellbeing

Mental health is a growing concern among students. If you are in need of some assistance, please feel free to come speak to me. The University has also a number of services available to help you with your emotional wellbeing. Visit Health & Wellness for more information:

<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/health-wellness/>

Educational Supports

If you require any assistance with the course material and assignments, please come speak with me and I will do my best to help you. For additional support, you may want to visit one of U of T's writing centres (<https://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/>) as well as U of T's Academic Success Centre (<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/academic-success/>).

Course Schedule & Readings

Week #1 (September 11th) - Introduction: A Brief History of Human Rights in Global Politics (total reading = 38 pages)

- Sam McFarland, "The Slow Creation of Humanity," *Political Psychology* Vol. 32 No. 1 (February 2011), pp. 1-20.
- Aryeh Neier, *The International Human Rights Movement: A History* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012), chapters 1.

Week #2 (September 18th) – What are Human Rights? (total reading = 57 pages)

- Frans de Waal & Stephen A. Sherblom, "Bottom-up Morality: The Basis of Human Morality in our Primate Nature," *Journal of Moral Education* Vol. 47 No. 2 (2018), pp. 248-258
- Yuval Noah Harari, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* (McClelland & Stewart, 2016), Chapters 2 (pp. 22-44).
- Lynn Hunt, "Revolutionary Rights," in Pamela Slotte & Miia Halme-Tuomisaari (eds.), *Revisiting the Origins of Human Rights* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 105-118.
- Micheline Ishay, "What are Human Rights? Six Historical Controversies," *Journal of Human Rights* Vol. 3 No. 3 (2004), pp. 359-371.

Unit 1: The Uses of Human Rights in Global Politics

Week #3 (September 25th) – Human Rights and Empire Building (total reading = 89 pages)

- Ahmed Afzaal, "The Origin of Islam as a Social Movement," *Islamic Studies* Vol. 42 No. 2 (2003), pp. 203-243.
- Alice Conklin, "Colonialism and Human Rights, A Contradiction in Terms? The Case of France and West Africa, 1985-1914," *American Historical Review* Vol. 103, No. 2 (April 1998), pp. 419-442.
- Roxanne Doty, *Imperial Encounters: The Politics of Representation in North-South Relations* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 23-49.

Week #4 (October 2nd) – Human Rights and the Use of Military Force (total reading = 55 pages)

- Davide Rodogno, "Humanitarian Intervention in the Nineteenth Century," in Alex Bellamy & Tim Dunne (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Responsibility to Protect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 19-37.

- Chaim Kaufmann & Robert Pape, “Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain’s Sixty-Year Campaign Against the Atlantic Slave Trade,” *International Organization* Vol. 53 No. 4 (Autumn 1999), pp. 631-668.

Week #5 (October 9th) – Human Rights and Democratization & Great Power Balancing (total reading = 64 pages)

- Emilie Hafner-Burton, Edward Mansfield & Jon Pevehouse, “Human Rights Institutions, Sovereignty Costs and Democratization,” *British Journal of Human Rights* Vol. 45 (2015), pp. 1-27.
- Clifford Bob, “‘Dalit Rights are Human Rights’: Caste Discrimination, International Activism, and the Construction of a New Human Rights Issue,” *Human Rights Quarterly* Vol. 29 (2007), pp. 167-193.
- Kathryn Sikink, “Latin America’s Protagonist Role in Human Rights,” *Sur International Journal on Human Rights* Vol. 12 No. 22 (December 2015), pp. 207-219.

Week #6 (October 16th) – Human Rights and the Pursuit of Material Self-Interest (total reading = 70 pages)

- James Ron, Howard Ramos & Kathleen Rodgers, “Transnational Information Politics: NGO Human Rights Reporting, 1986-2000,” *International Studies Quarterly* (2005), pp. 557-587.
- Alan Kuperman “Darfur: Strategic Victimhood Strikes Again?” *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* Vol. 4 No. 3 (2009), pp. 281-303.
- Ekin Ok, Yi Qian, Brendan Strejcek & Karl Aquino, “Signaling Virtuous Victimhood as Indicators of Dark Triad Personalities,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (May 2020), pp. 1-29.

Unit 2: Controversies Surrounding Human Rights in Global Politics

Week #7 (October 23rd) - Are Human Rights Universal or a Form of Western Cultural Imperialism? (total reading = 82 pages)

*******Analytical Essay #1 Due**

- Makau Mutua, “Savages, Victims and Saviors: The Metaphor of Human Rights,” *Harvard International Law Journal* Vol. 42 No. 1 (Winter 2001), pp. 201-245.
- Thomas Franck, “Are Human Rights Universal?” *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 80 No. 1 (Jan-Feb 2001), pp. 191-204.
- Jack Donnelly, “The Relative Universality of Human Rights,” *Human Rights Quarterly* Vol. 29 No. 2 (May 2007), pp. 281-306.

Week #8 (October 30th) – Is Armed Humanitarian Intervention Ever Justified? (total readings = 64 pages)

- Ray Kiely, “Intervention – Imperialism or Human Rights?”, *OpenDemocracy.Net* (October 20, 2014). Available at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/intervention-imperialism-or-human-rights/>
- Sean Richmond, “Why is Humanitarian Intervention So Divisive? Revisiting the Debate Over the 1999 Kosovo Intervention,” *Journal on the Use of Force and International Law* Vol. 3 No. 2 (2016), pp. 234-259.
- Michael O’Hanlon, “Doing it Right: The Future of Humanitarian Intervention,” *Brookings* (September 1 2000). Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/doing-it-right-the-future-of-humanitarian-intervention/>
- Theodora-Ismene Gizelis & Kristin Kosek, “Why Humanitarian Interventions Succeed or Fail,” *Cooperation & Conflict* Vol. 40 No. 4 (2005), pp. 363-383.

Week #9 (November 6th) – Should Social Movements Look to International Law to Advance their Struggle? (total reading = 68 pages)

- Sejal Parmar, “The Internationalisation of Black Lives Matter at the Human Right Council,” *EJIL:Talk!* (June 26, 2020). Available at: <https://www.ejiltalk.org/the-internationalisation-of-black-lives-matter-at-the-human-rights-council/>
- Jack Goldsmith & Eric Posner, *The Limits of International Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 3-17 and 107-134.
- Beth Simmons, *Mobilizing for Human Rights: International Law in Domestic Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 3-21

*******Reading Week – November 9th-13th**

Week #10 (November 20th) – Can We Trust the Empirical Claims Made by Social Movements and NGOs? (total readings = 74 pages)

- Wendy Wong, “Becoming a Household Name: How Human Rights NGOs Establish Credibility Through Organizational Structure,” in Peter Gourevitch, David Lake & Janice Gross Stein, *The Credibility of Transnational NGOs: When Virtue is Not Enough* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 86-111.
- Robert Charles Blitt, “Who Will Watch the Watchdogs? Human Rights Nongovernmental Organizations and the Case for Regulation,” *Buffalo Human Rights Law Review* Vol. 10 No 5 (2004), pp. 321-367.
- Robert Bernstein, “Rights Watchdog, Lost in the Middle East,” *New York Times* (October 19, 2019).
- “Why We Report on ‘Open’ Societies: Responding to Robert Bernstein’s NYT Op-Ed,” *Human Rights Watch* (October 20, 2019). Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2009/10/20/why-we-report-open-societies>

- Steven Pinker, “One Thing to Change: Anecdotes Aren’t Data,” *The Harvard Gazette* (June 21, 2009). Available at: <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2019/06/focal-point-harvard-professor-steven-pinker-says-the-truth-lies-in-the-data/>

Week #11 (November 27th) – Have We Made Any Progress? (total readings = 78 pages)

- John Lanchester, “The Case Against Civilization: Did Our Hunter-Gatherer Ancestors Have it Better,” *New Yorker* (September 11, 2017).
- Kathryn Sikkink, *Evidence for Hope: Making Human Rights Work in the 21st Century* (Princeton University Press, 2017), chapter 5 (pp. 139-180).
- Samuel Moyn, *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), Introduction.
- Steven Pinker, “The Enlightenment is Working,” *Wall Street Journal* (February 9 2018).
- Samuel Moyn, “Hype for the Best,” *The New Republic* (March 19, 2018).

Week #12 (December 4th) – Can Human Rights Survive COVID-19 and the Decline of the West? (total readings = 76 pages)

- Review some of the newsletters published by *OpenDemocracy’s* “Democracy Watch” project, which can be accessed here: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/tagged/democracywatch/>
- Stephen Hopgood, “Human Rights on the Road to Nowhere,” in Stephen Hopgood, Jack Snyder & Leslie Vinjamuri (eds.), *Human Rights Futures* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 283-310.
- James Ron et al., *Taking Root: Human Rights and Public Opinion in the Global South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), chapter 3 & 6.

*******Analytical Essay #2 Due December 11th**