Course description

This lecture course examines the meanings and interpretations of notions such as democracy, democratic politics, democratic transition, and liberalism, and their complex relationship to an evolving universal human rights culture. It critically examines conventional views on the origins, nature, and scope of Western liberal democratic political regimes, as well as the latter’s claim on the universality of human rights. It also discusses the double standard approaches used by longstanding democracies in their ‘measurement’ of other countries’ commitment to democracy and human rights. At the same time, it challenges non-Western regimes’ counterclaims that democracy and human rights are to be rejected, as they are ‘just’ a Western cultural phenomenon that is inimical to their “own cultures”. The discussion on democratic governance and human rights is shaped by philosophical, political, economic, and historical perspectives, which contrast religious and natural law arguments with rational, scientific, and materialistic approaches. Lastly, the course assesses the expanding theoretical body on democracy and human rights, with its corresponding burgeoning international bureaucracy; democracy and human rights and capitalism; the ‘naturalization’ of the use of torture in recent times; new instances of genocide; indigenous peoples’ persistent oppression of their human rights, and the questionable forms of justice that characterize post-conflict societies, especially in the developing world.

Course requirements

Marking for this course is based on the following assignments:

1. A two-hour long mid-term examination, worth 20 % of the final grade, to be held on Friday 10 February 2016. Location and time to be announced. The format of this examination is explained at the end of this course outline.

2. A research paper, due on Thursday 2 March 2016, at the beginning of the regular class, and worth 30 % of the final grade. Topics and instructions for this paper are given at the end of this course outline. Late papers will be penalized at the rate of one sub-letter grade of deduction for each working day of delay, up to a maximum of one week. After one week, the instructor may refuse to accept this assignment unless proper
medical certification stating a prolonged inability to fulfil academic responsibilities is provided. Marks for papers accepted by the instructor after one week of lateness will be dropped by one letter grade. Students must talk to the instructor with anticipation if they believe they will need a legitimate extension. Teaching assistants cannot grant an extension. The instructor and teaching assistants assume no responsibility whatsoever for assignments left under their office doors, faxed, or texted (none of which is advised).

3. A two-and-half-hour long end-of-term examination, worth 40 % of the final grade, and held during the April examination period. The format of this examination is explained at the end of this course outline.

4. Tutorial participation, worth 10 % of the final mark. Tutorials begin on the week of 9 January.

**Academic Accommodation**

Students who require academic accommodation must immediately contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Students Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone at 905-525-9140 extension 28652, or by email at sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities.

**Communication**

Students who wish to communicate electronically with the instructor and/or teaching assistants must at all times use their McMaster University email address, as other email addresses will not be acknowledged. Students are encouraged to visit the instructor and teaching assistants during scheduled office hours. Students are expected to regularly check Avenue to Learn for course updates.

**Academic Integrity**

Students are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials students earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g., the grade of Zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the University.

It is the student’s responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at [http://www.mcmaster.ca/senate/academic/ac_integrity.htm](http://www.mcmaster.ca/senate/academic/ac_integrity.htm)

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:
1. Plagiarism, e.g., the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group-work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.
A software package designed to reveal plagiarism will be used in this course. In addition to a hard copy, students will be required to simultaneously submit their work electronically at gallegui@mcmaster.ca. As well, each written submission and assignment must include a statement signed by the student that the work is original and no plagiarism has been committed in its development and production.

**Turnitin.Com**
In this course a web-based service (Turnitin.com) will be used to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a hard and electronic copy to the instructor on the due dates. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, go to [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

**Unexpected Circumstances**
The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the academic term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

**McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF)**
This is an online, self-reporting tool for students to report absences that last up to three (3) days, and to request accommodation for any missed academic work that is worth less than 25% of the final grade. This tool cannot be used during any final examination period. It is the prerogative of the instructor to determine the appropriate relief for missed term work. Students may submit a maximum of one request per term. The form should be filled out immediately when the student is about to return to class after an absence. It is the student’s responsibility to follow up with the instructor immediately (within two working days) about the nature of the accommodation. Students who have been absent for more than three (3) days, have missed academic work worth 25%, or more, or exceed one request per term must see their Faculty Academic Advisor. Students will be required to provide supporting documentation.
Religious accommodations
Students who require academic accommodation due to religious reasons, indigenous, and spiritual observances need to familiarize themselves with the University Policy on Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous, and Spiritual Observances and discuss as well with the instructor.

Text requirements

The following textbook has been ordered through the McMaster University Bookstore:


In addition, the following journals are available online and can be downloaded through the McMaster Library. They can assist students in the preparation of the research paper, and in examining in greater detail some of the issues discussed in class:

Harvard Human Rights Journal, at: [www.law.harvard.edu/students/orgs/hrj/current.html](http://www.law.harvard.edu/students/orgs/hrj/current.html)

Human Rights Law Review, at: [hrlr.oxfordjournals.or/](http://hrlr.oxfordjournals.or/)

Journal of Human Rights, at: [www.wellesley.edu/journalshr/](http://www.wellesley.edu/journalshr/)


The International Journal of Human Rights, at: [http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713635869~db=all](http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713635869~db=all)
Schedule of lectures and required readings.

NB: Lectures are an important part of the learning process. While required readings provide a general background to the issues discussed in class, lectures by the instructor incorporate additional and complementary perspectives. Questions pertaining to readings are welcome in classes and tutorials. Assignments, especially the research paper and the examinations, must reflect familiarity both with readings and class and tutorial discussions. Relevant films may be shown throughout the term.

Week 1: January 5: Introduction to the course's objectives, organization, and evaluation.


Required readings

Goodhart, Michael, “Introduction: Human Rights in Politics and Practice” (1-8); Chandler, David, Chapter 7: “Contemporary Critiques of Human Rights” (110-126), and Landman, Todd & Larissa Kersten, Chapter 8: “Measuring and Monitoring Human Rights” (127-144).

Lectures by the instructor.

Week 2

Required readings

Cardenas, Sonia, Chapter 5: “Human Rights in Comparative Politics” (77-92); Short, Damien, Chapter 6: “Sociological and Anthropological Approaches” (93-109).

Lecture by the instructor.

Week 3
January 17, 19, 20: The dialectical origins of Human Rights: From the Magna Carta to the American Revolution to the French Revolution to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The emergence of the concept of the Individual; the rise of Capitalism; the Reformation Movement; the rise of the Nation State and the consolidation of historically particularistic rights into universal rights.

Required readings


Lectures by the instructor

Recommended readings
Hobbes, Thomas: “On the Natural Condition of Mankind as Concerning their Felicity and Misery,” from Leviathan (ch.13).

Locke, John: “A Letter Concerning Toleration.”

Marx, Karl: The Communist Manifesto; On the Materialist Conception of History: see: Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy.

Week 4 & 5: January 24, 26, 27, & 31: The expansion of democracy and human rights in the Western World: From the working classes’ struggles for democracy to liberal democratic regimes to the rise and fall of the Welfare State. Capitalism, Democracy, and Human Rights: Can they be reconciled?

Required readings

Glasius, Marlies & Doutje Lettinga, Chapter 9: “Global Civil Society and Human Rights” (147-162); Richards, David & Ronald Gelleny, Chapter 13: “Economic Globalization and Human Rights” (216-234); and Davenport, Christian, Chapter 14: “Political Democracy and State Repression” (235-254).

Lectures by the instructor

Week 5 & 6: February 2, 3, 7, & 9: Democratic transitions in the post-Cold War period. The adoption of the democratic method (Joseph Schumpeter, the Pluralist School) by developing countries. The limits of conditional definitions.

Required readings

Dunne, Tim & Marianne Hanson, Chapter 3: “Human Rights in International Relations” (44-59); and Smith, Rhona, Chapter 4: “Human Rights in International Law” (60-76).

Lectures by the instructor

Recommended readings


Mid-term examination: Friday 10 February, from 11:30-to-13:20 pm.

Required readings


Lectures by the instructor.

Recommended readings:


Winter Break: 20-24 February: No classes

Week 8: February 28, March 2: The end of the Cold War; new wave of democratization; old and new conflicts and the new wave of human rights abuses.

Required readings

Strauss, Scott, Chapter 20: “Genocide and Human Rights” (351-369).

2 March 2016: Research paper due in class. Worth 25 % of course grade. Include statement on plagiarism. Email electronic copy to the instructor today, as well.

Week 9: March 7 & 9: Western Intervention: A blessing or a curse?

Required reading


Lecture by the instructor.

Week 10: March 14 & 16: Torture and other human rights abuses: a peculiar way of promoting Western values to non-Western societies.

Required reading


Lecture by the instructor.

Required reading

Lecture by the instructor.

Week 12: March 28 & 30: Indigenous social and political struggles

Required readings


Assignments

I. Research paper. Worth 30 percent of the final mark.

This essay should examine and discuss the problem at hand by using supplementary, primary and/or secondary, reading materials relevant to the argument. The essay must not be solely based on the course’s required readings. This assignment has two components, and both will be reflected in the grade assigned to it. First, students must submit an outline that includes the research question, problem statement, thesis, hypothesis or argument, and preliminary bibliography by Friday, 20 January for the instructor’s or teaching assistant’s approval and guidance. This outline must be about three double-space pages. Next, students must submit the fully edited final version of their research paper, including all preliminary work commented upon by instructor and teaching assistants, at the beginning of our regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday 2 March 2016. Essays may be submitted early.

Somewhere between 12 to 15 pages, not including title page and bibliographical references would be an adequate length for this essay. Follow the APA or the Chicago Manual of Style guidelines for the writing of academic papers. Standard use of bibliographical references is a must. The paper must be typed; have a title page; all pages numbered; lines double-spaced; and wide margins (standard word processor format) left for comments. A copy of the paper must also be submitted by e-mail at the same time. The outline and final paper should include a statement by the student that the paper is original and that no plagiarism has been committed in its development and production. Academic offences (plagiarism and else) will be penalized in accordance with the regulations set by the University Senate.
Topics

Choose one of the topics listed below. These are broadly stated, open-ended suggested areas of research. Proceed by designing your own research question (main and secondary ones), stated in question form. Follow that with a declaratory sentence that states the objectives of your research; then, indicate the preliminary evidence you have to support your research question. Add a tentative bibliography of the works you intend to use in the research. Seek the approval/advice of the instructor and/or teaching assistant before embarking on the research and writing of this assignment (ref.: outline due on Friday, 20 January 2016):

1. Right-wing, conservative ideologues have a poorer record than liberal or left-of-centre activists in inventing, accepting, and entrenching individual, social, cultural, and environmental human rights.

2. Non-Western rulers’ claims that Western standards of human rights are inimical to their societies and cultures are to be rejected as self-serving and detrimental to the universality content of human rights.

3. Capitalism, democracy, and human rights are irreconcilable in theory and practice.

4. Freedom of religion is not freedom to be intolerant towards others’ religion.

5. Special interest groups’ entitlement claims have diluted the universal meaning of human rights.

6. Endless wars, whether international or domestic, are the greatest threats to democracy and human rights.

7. State-sponsored terrorism is a major threat to individual and collective human rights.

8. So-called Humanitarian Intervention by Western powers, and their Third World surrogates, is a major threat to human rights.

9. Canada’s claims to be a paragon in the international human rights stage are not matched by historical and contemporary developments.

10. The enhancement of a positive human rights culture can only come about with a forceful application of international law and genuine international justice.

II. Mid-term examination. This exam is worth 20 % of the final grade. All required readings and class discussions must be used in answering the corresponding questions. The examination is two-hour long. No aids are allowed. The examination
comprises two sections: Section I asks to identify, explain the meaning, and discuss the significance of three notions, definitions, and concepts discussed in class, tutorial, and readings. Section II is a compulsory essay question. Section I is worth 45 percent of the examination (each notion is up to 15 points) and Section II is worth 55 percent of the examination.

**III. Final Examination.** This assignment is worth 40 % of the final mark. All required readings and class and tutorial discussions must be used in answering the corresponding questions. The final examination is two-and-half-hour long. No aids are allowed. This examination is cumulative. The examination comprises three sections: Section I asks to identify, explain the meaning, and discuss the significance of three notions, definitions, and concepts discussed in class, tutorial, and readings. Section II is a compulsory essay question. Section III gives students a choice between two essay questions. Sections I and III are worth 30 percent each; Section II is worth 40 percent of the examination.

**IV. Tutorial participation.** This assignment is worth 10 percent of the final mark. Tutorial participation involves attendance and the active engagement in the discussion of required readings, class lectures, and assignments as determined by tutorial leaders and instructor at their discretion.