

Political Science 2219E (Huron University College)
The Politics of Human Rights
Course Outline

Prerequisites: Pol.Sci.1020E

Antirequisite: Pol. Sci. 3388E

Type: Intersession (Essay) May 15/23 to June 22/23 (final exam period June 26-27)

Place: Online: Synchronous/Asynchronous

NOTE: The Zoom meetings and the forum posts are the synchronous parts of the course Mondays to Thursdays 1-4pm (more on these below). If you cannot make these times, please contact me before the course start.

Instructor: Dr. Robert F. Jonasson

Office Hour: no formal hours at Huron (please e-mail) but Wednesday Zoom time will have an opportunity for you to speak with me (3pm-4pm)

E-mail address: rjonasso@uwo.ca (please e-mail anytime)

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Political Science 2219E, the Politics of Human Rights, is a course which examines the theoretical underpinnings, political dimensions and real-world applications of human rights. The course combines a focus on the political dimension associated with human rights, the background, meaning and interpretation of human rights, with a focus on the claims of cultural relativism and the special ‘problem’ of women and children’s rights. Part of the course will focus on human rights through a comparative analysis of particular countries’ human rights records, with an emphasis on the international actors and governance structures such as the United Nations (and related human rights treaties) and the International Criminal Court.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students should have definitional knowledge and understanding of elements of political theory, comparative politics and international relations as this applies to the topic of human rights and its political manifestations. By the end of this course, students will be able to identify the key components of the politics of human rights and examine several historical and current states’ human rights records. Students will have an appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of the human rights concept.

GRADE BREAKDOWN: (more info on these items is in the outline)

1) ESSAY: 8-10 page paper due Thursday, June 15/23 by 4pm in OWL -Assignments – Essay - worth 40%

2) FINAL EXAM (TBA online, take-home, open-book essay; 24 hours – on whole course; in the final exam period): worth 40% (more will be posted to OWL –Resources on this during the course)

3) 5 ON-LINE FORUM POSTS: worth 5% (1% each) These are online in OWL - Forums.

4/ ASSIGNMENT: Your own view of human rights. 4-6 double-paced pages due Thursday, June 1/23 by 4pm in OWL – Assignments – Assignment: worth 15%

RECOMMENDED READING:

Tremblay, Kelly, Lipson and Mayer. 2009. *Understanding Human rights*. This is not available at UWO Bookstore any longer. If you cannot get it, follow the course notes instead.

REQUIRED READINGS:

All required readings will be on OWL. All readings are given below and are subject to change.

Week #1: week beginning May 15 - **The Genealogy of the Human Rights Discourse** -- course introduction, expectations; Human Rights - a basic intro; sources of Western Human Rights and non-Western traditions: Judeo-Christian revelation; the natural law tradition in the West; Islamic views; Critical traditions: Orthodox Marxism; utilitarianism; National Socialism

Readings – Rerum Novarum pdf (Leo XIII, 1891); Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen pdf (France, 1789); The Cairo Declaration on the Human Rights in Islam pdf (Organization of the Islamic Conference, 1990); Marx’s critique of human rights pdf (author unknown, 2010); utilitarianism pdf

Week #2: week beginning May 23 (May 22 is a holiday) - **Beyond Negative Rights** - Human Rights as individual rights: negative and positive liberty; group rights – are they human rights?

Reading – textbook Ch.1

Week #3: week beginning May 29 - **Are Human Rights consistent with multiple meanings of them?** – women’s rights and children’s rights; Human Rights and cultural relativism;

Reading – textbook Chs.4,7

Thursday, June 1 – **Assignment due by 4pm**

Week #4: - week beginning June 5 - **Human Rights Instruments and Enforcement Mechanisms** – Human Rights treaties; International forums for justice; compliance and the difficulty of enforcement

Readings – Universal Declaration of Human Rights pdf (U.N., 1948); International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights pdf (U.N., 1966); International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights pdf (U.N., 1966); International Criminal Court pdf (Rosenthal, 2001) + textbook Chs.2,3

Week #5: week beginning June 12 - **The abuse of Human Rights: Case Studies** - Nazi Germany and the USSR ; North Korea and Russia

Readings – The Soviet Union and Stalin pdf; Nazi Germany pdf; North Korea and human rights pdf; Russia and human rights pdf

Thursday, June 15: - **Essay due by 4pm**

Week #6:- week beginning June 19 - **Con't** - China, the United States

Readings -- China and human rights pdf; The American death penalty and human rights pdf (Dieter, date unknown)

The late penalty is 2% per working day (Fridays and weekends do not count). **In all cases, the date when submitted to OWL is the date which will be considered definitive when assigning late penalties. For both the assignment and the essay, a grade of zero will be assigned if more than 2 weeks past the due date. This late penalty does not apply to forum posts.**

**ESSAY TOPICS POL.SCI. 2219E
PROF. JONASSON**

Topic suggestions: (create your own thesis statement out of the below)

1/ The sources of human rights thinking – why should human rights exist and what makes us worthy of them?

2/ Which rights should be considered human rights and why?

3/ Is the current Western human rights discourse an imposition on non-Western peoples?

4/ Can any of the international institutions/treaties that we now have consistently and realistically help to realize human rights?

5/ Does the enforcement of human rights require a sovereign world state?

6/ Look at any 2 current nation-states and compare their main human rights records. NOTE: Use the rights in the ‘International Bill of Rights’ to compare.

NOTE: You may do your own topic but it must be approved by the instructor. Questions must be similar in scope and nature to the ones above. Failure to get approval will result in grade of 0.

Due Date: Thursday, *June 15/23* in OWL-Assignments-Essay by 4pm (do not wait until the last minute – lates will be strictly enforced; if you submit the wrong file, you must e-mail me the correct one before the deadline). Turnitin will be used.

Length: 8-10 pages double-spaced. You must have a bibliography and papers must be properly cited.

Files: the e-files must be in Word or PDF format and must have your last name as the start of the file name. No hard copy is needed.

Lost Assignments: It is your responsibility to have other copies of your paper.

Bibliography: You must include a bibliography

Citations and other items: See Essay Instructions document on OWL.

**PLEASE SEE ESSAY GUIDELINES DOCUMENT IN OWL –
RESOURCES**

2219E ASSIGNMENT

Length: 4-6 pages double-spaced minimum (but 10 maximum)

Due date: Thursday, June 1/23 by 4pm in OWL – Assignments - Assignment (do not wait to the last minute – lates will be strictly enforced; if you submit the wrong file, you must e-mail me the correct one before the deadline)

Files: the e-files must be in Word or PDF format and must have your last name as the start of the file name. No hard copy is needed.

Lost Assignments: It is your responsibility to have other copies of your paper (e-file)

Bibliography: not needed

Citations: not needed

You are simply to outline your own view of human rights answering the following (in any way you want):

1/ Do humans have human rights? If yes, which rights are paramount?

2/ If yes, why should they have rights (what are their sources)? If no, why not?

Write in complete sentences and paragraphs.

NOTE: The Essay Instructions document may give you some help here, so consult it, but remember this assignment is not an essay.

This assignment is pass/fail: if you do the above properly, you will get 15/15. If it is not done correctly, you will get 0/15. **I will not comment on these assignments unless there are major concerns or return these assignments.** I will post the grades to OWL by the end of the first week of June. The regular late penalty applies for late assignments (see above) ,

2219E ON-LINE FORUM QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

On **OWL – Forums** – you will be answering 5 questions in 6 weeks (see times in outline below) which you will access by going to **OWL- Forums** on various Tuesdays and Thursdays between 1-4pm (you must do them in these time frames, unless you have special permission)

The question will be straightforward and short. You must then post an answer in Forums close to 1 double-spaced page long (you may go over this, but try to keep it near 1 page). These are opinion questions, so no formal research is required. *It is your post, not a response to another post that counts.* If I cannot see your post, it is not valid. Make sure you have posted it correctly. You may email me the answers instead of posting them (in the same time frame).

DO NOT COMMENT ON THE OTHER STUDENT POSTS OR POST LINKS OR CUT AND PASTE OTHER WRITINGS

Due date: By 4pm on the dates below. **Do not wait until the last minute – even one minute late means I will delete your answer.**

Marks: 5% of total grades (1% for each of 5). You must do 5 of the 9 sessions offered (any 5) and they not formally graded. I will lock sessions once they are finished. **NOTE: There are no make-ups.**

Weeks: Tuesdays – May 23; May 30; June 6; June 13; June 20; Thursdays – May 18; May 25; June 8; June 22

GENERAL COURSE RULES AND SUGGESTIONS

The following rules are to be taken very seriously. They will be strictly enforced. Every student must be treated fairly; the rules below will ensure that all students will be treated in a just manner. If you follow the rules and suggestions laid out here, you will have a much better chance of doing well in the course. If you break the rules, you will suffer certain consequences.

1/ Do not be disruptive in class. After one warning, you will be asked to leave. Continual behavioral problems may lead to more severe consequences (eg. removal from the course).

2/ Come to class on time.

3/ Ask questions intelligently. The prof will let you know when questions can be asked (i.e. later in the lecture). Do not ask questions for the sake of asking them (i.e. to show 'interest', to 'stick out' etc.). Questions should contribute to the lecture. Questions about course material can usually be answered in this course outline.

4/ All grade values in the course outline are 'set in stone'. There will be no re-weighting or bell-curve. No extra assignments will be given. No items will be omitted from the final grade.

5/ All due dates (eg. essays, assignments, tests, exams) in the course outline are 'set in stone', unless they are moved to a later date by the instructor. Under no condition will due dates be made *earlier* than the dates indicated in the course outline.

6/ Do not assume your past (eg. past grades, experience level, age) is the key to your future performance. Profs assume everyone wishes high grades. Please do not indicate to the prof that you need or expect a certain grade in the course.

7/ All essays must be handed to the instructor in-class and/or online on the due date.

8/ As indicated in the policy of the dept., there are some legitimate excuses which may allow students to get limited extensions for essays, tests and exams. **MOST MAJOR ITEMS IN THE COURSE MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN OFFICIAL NOTE (eg. doctor's note) which is shown to Academic Counselling.** Dates must be present to indicate the time period the student was affected. **Academic Counselling must approve your request before I will.**

9/ If an extension is warranted, the prof and the student will negotiate a time frame for submission. This time frame cannot be just what the student wants.

10/ I take all marking very seriously and I am unwilling to change a grade unless I have made a real error (eg. marked you down for a statement which is not wrong; marked you down for a grammatical error which is not wrong). Subjective feelings are not a valid basis for an appeal (eg. "I think you are too hard on me"; "I have never had a mark this low"). An appeal must go to me first. Your grade may go up, stay the same or go down (I would give then you an average of

the old grade and the new grade). You may go down if I discover critical things I missed the first time.

All appeals must be put into writing. I may take a day or more to make my decision. I do not discuss with students about their papers on the day I hand them back.

11/ If you are a student with a serious concern, whether valid or not, and you are unable to keep up with the course for a long period of time, the prof strongly advises that you drop the course. Students who get too far behind generally do not finish in any case or receive an uncharacteristically low grade. Sometimes unfortunate events occur in our lives; try to persevere, but if you cannot, it is no shame to reduce your course load in certain situations.

12/ Please do not ask the instructor for final grades (or final exam grades). These must be released by the Registrar's Office first.

13/ NOTE: the following updated policy has been in effect for all reference requests since August 1, 2021 for past or current students

I will give students basic references (for jobs, student exchange programs etc.) if their grade is above 75% in a class in which I have taught them (final grade). **For all post-graduate references (law school, grad school, teachers' college etc.) and scholarships, students must have completed at least 3 courses (half or full) with me beyond 1020E and have a grade of 85% or better (as an average in the courses). If students took 1020E with me, they may or may not factor the grade in this class into their average, but they will need 2 more classes (half or full).** However, good character is an important consideration for promotion as well. I do not promote opportunists (eg. those who ask for higher grades without merit) or those with 'entitlement' attitudes. Make sure you give me at least 3 weeks notice for any deadlines and always give me all forms and postage. **I will do a maximum of 4 paper/online references for a student in a term.**

ADDITIONAL COURSE PROCEDURES (ESPECIALLY FOR ON-LINE INSTRUCTION)

1/ **E-Mail:** You may e-mail me at rjonasso@uwo.ca anytime. I will check e-mail several times a day Monday to Saturday (not including any holidays) – from 10am to 6pm. I will endeavour to answer your e-mails within several hours during the above period (from 6pm to 10am, you may e-mail, but I will take longer to respond). There may be some exceptions to the above, but I will try to stick to this schedule. Please always be courteous.

2/ **Questions:** Ask questions intelligently. Do not ask questions for the sake of asking them (i.e. to show 'interest', to 'stick out' etc.). Please ask specific questions about the topics; questions like 'can you explain this topic to me?' are too broad. I cannot tutor each student obviously. Questions about course material can usually be answered in this course outline or on other documents. Of course, ask away! I'm especially glad to answer thoughtful questions.

3/ Lecture Notes: These are on OWL in Resources. They are partially replacing my lectures while the course is online and are now the most detailed ever. They are crucial to what I want you to know. The readings are excellent but use them to illuminate the material in the notes (you must read them though!). Material in the readings not covered in the notes will not be tested (even if I still hope you will read it!). If the notes and readings disagree, go with me. I have placed all the notes together by topics (generally in order). How you go about learning them is up to you, but the outline is suggesting a certain weekly breakdown.

4/ Lecture files: These will be posted in OWL –Resources before the class and are more like my normal lectures. Some may be posted during the course.

5/ Zoom meetings: These will be held every Monday (except May 22) and Wednesday through Zoom-OWL at 1pm sharp and will be used to discuss course outline expectations, items, i.e. the essay and give students a chance to ask questions about the weekly topics. Please read the weekly topic materials in OWL to ask questions. They are not lectures but I will attempt to fill in some blanks if need be. I realize some of you are in different time zones etc., so I understand if the synchronous meetings will be difficult for some of you. Attendance is strongly encouraged but no formal attendance will be taken. The Zoom link will always be in OWL - Zoom.

6/ Grading scheme:

The University of Western Ontario Senate has adopted a set of grade descriptors which explain the meaning of grades assigned in all university courses:

- A+ 90-100% One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
- A 80-89% Superior work which is clearly above average
- B 70-79% Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
- C 60-69% Competent work, meeting requirements
- D 50-59% Fair work, minimally acceptable
- F below 50% Fail

7/ Problems with OWL/Internet: If OWL is officially down for all students generally for a period of more than 12 hours on the day something is due, I will permit an extension to all students – generally, the next day. However, short problems cannot justify this, even to the deadline itself. My advice is do not wait to submit work at the last minute on due days!
Personal computer/internet/OWL issues are not valid grounds for an excuse.