Human Rights Voices

Honors 217

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| Spring 2015 | Dr. William Simmons |
| Class Time: MWF 9:00-9:50  NOTE: We will meet on some Fridays via  videoconference and others will be  work days for group projects. | Classroom: Education 240 |
| Offices: Slonaker Living Room and Gender and  Women’s Studies (925 Tyndall Ave) 108B | Office Phone: 520.626.7884  NOTE: I do not check this very often. It is better to use my cell (480.388.0718), but use it judiciously. Best to email me: |
| Office Hours: Tentatively MW 10-11, 12-1 | williamsimmons@email.arizona.edu |
| And by Appointment | skype ID: toutautrejd |

**Course Attributes**

General Education: Diversity Emphasis

General Education: Tier 2 Individuals and Societies

**Catalog Description**

This course is first and foremost an introduction to the field of international human rights including the work of human rights tribunals, non-governmental organizations, activists, and survivors. We will approach this topic by analyzing the challenges in listening to the voices of human rights stakeholders. Key questions include: what does it mean to do justice for the marginalized in society? Should human rights institutions take extraordinary measures to listen to the voices of the marginalized? Will the voices of the marginalized be co-opted by existing power structures, thus rendering them even more marginalized?

**Course Description**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights “is **the voice of millions of human beings**, victims of oppression, misery and ignorance, who aspire to live under conditions of greater justice, freedom and simple dignity” -- Rene Cassin, a key drafter of the UDHR

Perhaps, the first step in the activist journey of hyper solidarity is for human rights education activists **to learn from the victims of the perfidies of power rather than to presume to educate them** in the struggle for survival and justice. Humility before the victims of gross and flagrant violations of human rights, I believe, is critically indispensable for the would-be human rights education communities of the future. ... The problem then becomes one of how may we educate the human rights educators, rather than the people whom they so ardently wish to serve? --- Upendra Baxi, Scholar, Attorney, and Activist,

We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us. Too long has the public been deceived by misrepresentations, in things which concern us dearly (*Freedom’s Journal*, March 16, 1827).

Recently, human rights discourses have undergone a quiet revolution. After centuries of human rights being the near exclusive domain of elites such as philosophers and jurists, human rights advocates and scholars are now paying attention to the voices of the victims, including the most marginalized. Some scholars and activists, like the Instructor, have even argued that the voices of the marginalized should be privileged, and that this is one of the best ways to deconstruct and reinvigorate our understanding of human rights as well as the institutions that have been set up to advance human rights. Others have argued that it is impossible to truly listen to the voice of the Other, especially from a privileged position, and that most attempts end up co-opting the voices of the Other and reinforcing hegemonic power structures.

Such debates lead to the main questions that we will address in this course.

1. What does it mean to be marginalized?
2. How much, and in what manner, should we respond to the marginalized?
3. Is it possible for the most marginalized human rights victims to be heard by human

rights regimes (tribunals, non-governmental organizations, governments, etc.)?\

1. Should human rights regimes take extraordinary measures to listen to the voices of the

marginalized?

1. Will the voices of the marginalized be co-opted by existing power structures, thus

rendering them even more marginalized?

1. How are hegemonic knowledge structures developed and sustained?
2. Is it possible for hegemonic human rights knowledge structures to be deconstructed by

the voices of the most marginalized?

Throughout the semester we will critically analyze previous attempts at presenting the viewpoint of the marginalized Other and consider the best ways to do so in our globalized, networked, and technologized, world. Key themes in this exploration include; speaking, listening, communication and miscommunication, empathy, insinuation, authenticity, and representation.

As much as practical, this will be a learner-centered course where the instructor and students are all engaged as learners. Participation and empowerment will be key themes both substantively and pedagogically.

##### Course Objectives and Expected Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester it is expected that students will*, inter alia*:

1. Be exposed to a wide variety of voices from human rights stakeholders.
2. Be introduced to several recent major cases and controversies related to human rights in the U.S. and globally.
3. Better understand the various ways that activists attempt to advance human rights through social movements, litigation, and direct action.
4. Have examined in some detail the relationships between the voices of marginalized persons and existing social power structures.
5. Demonstrate the ability to locate, evaluate, and synthesize primary and secondary sources in human rights.
6. Have brainstormed and conceptualized how best to gather and present the voices of marginalized human rights stakeholders.
7. Have been actively involved in designing and implementing a major human rights project that involves gathering and presenting the voices of human rights stakeholders.
8. Work with a community group to advance a human rights cause.
9. Improve their ability to work productively and efficiently in groups on problem-based assignments.
10. Develop a passion for understanding human rights from the perspectives of the marginalized.

##### Course Requirements

***NOTE: there are no exams and no term papers per se!***

**Short Assignments (35+ Points):** Seven short assignments worth five points each will be assigned throughout the semester. These will consist of

1. Short (2- or 3-page) reflection papers on films, guest speakers, etc.
2. Other assignments for each course module. Some of these might be assigned by the class group responsible for that topic and might involve helping them with their community-based assignment.
3. Reflection and research papers on at least two community-campus events related to the course.

**Pairs Assignments (20 Points)**

Both of these assignments will be completed in groups of two students. For the first assignment, groups will be formed from their class project groups so that you will get a huge head start on that project. Each assignment should be tailored toward your group project and the results will be included in your final class project portfolio.

1. **Human Rights Scavenger Hunt (10 Points):** Before we get to the meat of the course, we all need to be familiar with a substantial amount of information on human rights and know how to locate appropriate primary and secondary sources with a focus on those that feature the voices of human rights victims. Therefore, during the first three weeks of the semester pairs of students will participate in a scavenger hunt to find information about their group topics. More details on the types of required sources and tips on finding them will be distributed in class.
2. **Presenting Human Rights Voices (10 Points).** Pairs of students will conduct research, write a 3-page report, and possibly make class presentations on some of the research methods used to gather and present human rights voices. These might include: digital ethnography, participatory action research, digital oral history, transmedia, participant observation, digital storytelling, community documentation, podcasting, and documentary filmmaking. Student presentations should lead to some serious group and class brainstorming about best practices that we should pursue in our class projects.

**Class Project: Presenting Human Rights Voices and Working with the Community (45 Points):**

Throughout the semester, groups of students will be actively involved in one of two real-world projects. **NOTE:** the instructor will work closely with each group throughout the semester.

1. A videoconferencing project being developed by a faculty team led by the Instructor, called Global Human Rights Direct (www.globalhumanrightsdirect.com). This is a very ambitious attempt by the instructor and others to create an online database of human rights stakeholders who are willing to engage in videoconferences for university classes, university events, community groups, and others.
2. Human Rights Voices Book(s) “Proposed here are a general Human Rights Voices textbook and the Human Rights Voices series. Each volume contains original contributions from those most affected by human rights issues, including victims, activists, attorneys, government officials, perpetrators, and volunteers. For the first time, students will hear directly from these key stakeholders who live daily with human rights challenges and violations. Indeed, the contributors will write their selection in the form of a letter to college students (Dear Student of Human Rights, Dear Student of African Human Rights, Dear Student of Transgender Rights, etc.). The contributors will tell their personal story, and will be encouraged to write about the larger lessons from their experiences that any student studying these issues should know.”

Students will decide on their final human rights issues and project by the third week of the semester. Groups of students will be responsible for brainstorming about key aspects of the project and conducting background research on ethical, theoretical (social epistemologies, knowledge communities, etc.), political, and technical issues. Groups will likely interview experts at UA and further afield. They will also reach out to stakeholders, both globally and locally, who could be willing to participate in this project. Completion of the project might require: conducting interviews with human rights stakeholders, creating podcasts or short films, and presenting the results in class.

Each group will also assist a community group working on their issue. This might involve helping with research, planning events, organizing webinars, etc.

Individual grades will be determined by a combination of their group’s final products and the Instructor’s evaluation of each student’s contribution to the group’s work. The instructor will make use of student self-evaluations, peer evaluations, and his own observations. See sample group project evaluation form on D2L.

This project concerns a great deal of brainstorming and experimentation, and some emotional work, so students will prepare a hard copy and/or electronic copy of a portfolio of their semesters’ work by the last day of class. This will include work products, personal reflections (diary or journal), a final reflection paper (2-3 pages), an annotated bibliography of relevant scholarly literature, their scavenger hunt assignment, the presenting human rights voices assignment, etc.

**Student Sign-up Sheet for Class Group Projects**

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| **Substantive Topic and Possible Community-Based Assignment** | **Possible Community-Based Assignments** | **Global Human Rights Direct**  **(Videoconferencing)** | **Human Rights Voice**  **(Book)** |
| **North Korea / Eritrea** | Film showing of *Camp 14* or ask Sheila and Semere about Eritrea |  |  |
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| **Sex Work and Human Trafficking** | Work with Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP) of Tucson on Films, Marketing, Events, or Protests |  |  |
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| **Lost Boys from South Sudan** | Assist with a Tucson Community Film Event or a Webinar from South Sudan |  |  |
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| **Comparative Immigration and Asylum Law** | Assist with Planning a Global Comparative Immigration Workshop |  |  |
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**Attendance:**

Since class sessions will be conducted mostly in seminar or group format, attendance, preparation, and participation from all students are crucial for the success of this course. Students missing more than four class periods will lose five points from their course grade. Excessive tardiness (10 minutes late), consistently coming to class unprepared, or other disrespectful and disruptive behavior in class (misuse of electronics, use of inappropriate language, disruptive conversations, etc.) can qualify as an absence.

The UA’s policy concerning Class Attendance and Administrative Drops is available at:

[http://catalog.arizona.edu/2012-13/policies/classatten.htm](https://mail.catnet.arizona.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=ppaWqj9-MkyIwWRbvnrlALy8K6P60M8IWfVGQQp1QVO8i7zbVdSLYdQQmuHcF0SBYKwhmlkqaf4.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fcatalog.arizona.edu%2f2012-13%2fpolicies%2fclassatten.htm)

All holidays or special events observed by organized religions will be honored for students who show affiliation with that religion. Absences pre‐approved by the UA Dean of Students (or the Dean’s designee) will be honored (e.g. athletes, debate team, military absence, hospitalization, death in family).

###### Grades

See this link for university grade policies: <http://catalog.arizona.edu/2012->13/policies/grade.htm#I

Your grade will be determined as follows:

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| --- | --- |
| 90 points and above | A |
| 80-89 | B |
| 70-79 | C |
| 60-69 | D |
| 59 and Below | E |

## Reasonable Accommodations

The instructor will be happy to work with students who require reasonable accommodations for disabilities or other circumstances.

**It is the University’s goal that learning experiences be as accessible as possible**. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability, please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options. You are also welcome to contact Disability Resources (520-621-3268) to establish reasonable accommodations. For additional information on Disability Resources and reasonable accommodations, please visit http://drc.arizona.edu/.

If you have reasonable accommodations, please plan to meet with me by appointment or during office hours to discuss accommodations and how my course requirements and activities may impact your ability to fully participate.

Please be aware that the accessible table and chairs in this room should remain available for students who find that standard classroom seating is not usable.

**Other Course Policies**

**Appropriate Conduct**

The Arizona Board of Regents’ Student Code of Conduct, ABOR Policy 5-308, prohibits threats of physical harm to any member of the University community, including to one’s self. See: <http://policy.arizona.edu/threatening-behavior-students>.

For more information on appropriate and inappropriate student conduct, see

<http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/policiesandcodes/studentcodeofconduct>

<http://policy.web.arizona.edu/disruptive-behavior-instructional> <http://policy.web.arizona.edu/threatening-behavior-students>

**Notification of Objectionable Materials**

This course contains material that some students may find objectionable. If you believe material to be covered will be objectionable, you should consult with the Instructor as soon as possible to discuss potential alternative materials and assignments.

**Confidentiality of Student Records**

As required by law under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), student records are confidential. This law and its applicability to your educational records may be accessed at: <http://www.registrar.arizona.edu/ferpa/default.htm>

**Changes to the Syllabus**

Information contained in this course syllabus, other than the grade and absence policies, may be subject to change with reasonable advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

##### WARNING!

**Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism includes not only the exact duplication of an author's words but also an unacknowledged close paraphrase. When in doubt give a citation**. **SPECIAL NOTE: Be sure not to plagiarize when preparing case materials. Students should be especially careful when cutting and pasting material from cases, briefs, and other sources.** **Use quotation marks and/or citations where appropriate**.

Students are encouraged to share intellectual views and discuss freely the principles and applications of course materials. However, graded work/exercises must be the product of independent effort unless otherwise instructed. Students are expected to adhere to the UA Code of Academic Integrity as described in the UA General Catalog. See: <http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/codeofacademicintegrity>.

## Required Readings

Bales, Kevin and Zoe Trodd, eds. 2008. *To Plead Our Own Cause: Personal Stories by Today's Slaves*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press. 978-0-8014-7438-5.

Required readings will be distributed / assigned as needed, often through D2L

**Students are required to have access to D2L!**

**Students are expected to check their university of arizona email accounts almost every day!**

**we might also use a class Facebook page.**

Course Outline and Readings

**NOTES:**

1. **I anticipate having several guest speakers join the class in person or via Skype, so we may have to adjust parts of this schedule to accommodate our guests.**
2. Some of the films will be watched outside of class and should be treated like assigned readings.
3. Student groups who are focusing on a specific issue for their class project might modify the required films and readings, with the Instructor’s permission.

**Week 1-3: Course Introduction**

Readings: Todd May, “Wrong, disagreement, subjectification” (Internet -https://educationmuseum.wordpress.com/2012/03/22/jacques-ranciere-disagreement-wrong-and-subjectification/)

Simmons, “Introduction: Deconstruction, Concrete Universalisms, and Human Rights of the Other” in *Human Rights Law and the Marginalized Other* (D2L)

*Human Rights Voices (Proposal)*

*Global Human Rights Direct (Proposals)*

Films: *Bosnia Hotel: Kenyan Warriors in Bosnia* by Thomas Balmès (Filmmakers Library

Online – Library Homepage – then Databases) (49 mins.)

*The Act of Killing* by Joshua Oppenheimer, Christine Cynn, and Anonymous (Netflix, YouTube, UA Library, etc.)

“Srebrenica - a Horrifying Confession” – 6 minute selection from *The Anatomy of Evil* by Ove Nyholm (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ri4u_IpCvXE>) (Optional)

Assigned: Reflection Paper on *Bosnia Hotel* and *The Act of Killing* (5 Points)

Human Rights Scavenger Hunt (10 Points)

Decide on Class Group Assignments

**Weeks 4-6 North Korea and Eritrea**

Readings: Robert Park, “The Forgotten Genocide, North Korea’s Prison State” (<http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/forgotten-genocide-north-korea%E2%80%99s-prison-state>)

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Eritrea (A/HRC/26/45) (<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/countries/AfricaRegion/Pages/ERIndex.aspx>)

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the General Assembly (A/69/548) (<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Countries/AsiaRegion/Pages/KPIndex.aspx>)

Connell, *Conversations with Eritrean Political Prisoners* (Selections)

Simmons, “Learning to Learn from the Voice of the Other” (D2L)

Films: *Camp 14: Total Control Zone* by Marc Wiese (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihUOHARC_Og>)

*Eritrea: Voices of Torture* by Elsa Chyrum

*One Heart Betrayed* by William Paul Simmons

Assigned: Reflection Paper on *Camp 14* (5 Points)

**Weeks 7-9 Sex Work and Human Trafficking**

Readings: Stéphanie Wahab and Meg Panichelli, “Ethical and Human Rights Issues in Coercive

Interventions with Sex Workers”

Juliana Piccillo, “Vice”

Brooke Elise Axtell, “What I Know of Silence”

Laura María Agustín, “Migrants in the Mistress's House: Other Voices in the "Trafficking" Debate” (D2L)

Kevin Bales and Zoe Trodd, *To Plead Our Own Cause* (Selections)

*Voices from Slavery* (Selections, Internet)

Victor Malarek, *The Natashas: Inside the Global Sex Trade* (Selections, D2L)

Melissa Gira Grant, *Playing the Whore: The Work of Sex Work*

Other Readings TBA

Films: *Nefarious: Merchant of Souls*, Directed by Benjamin Nolot, 2011 (Selections, in class)

Juliana Piccillo, *I Was a Teenage Prostitute* (in class)

Assigned: Short Assignment TBA

By Spring Break (March 11) you should turn in at least one of your events reflection and research papers (5 points) and your Gathering and Presenting Human Rights Voices assignment **(10 points)**

**Weeks 10-12 Comparative Immigration and Asylum Law**

Readings: Regan, *The Death of Josseline: Immigration Stories from the Arizona Borderlands* (Selections – will be posted on D2L)

Escobar-Valdez, “Reflections on Immigration, Binational policies and Human Rights Tragedies”(D2L – Simmons and Mueller, Chapter 1)

Simmons and Téllez, “Sexual Violence against Migrant Women and Children” (D2L)

Sarah Mares & Louise Newman, *Acting from the Heart* (Selections, D2L)

Laura Belous & Melissa Mundt, *Letters to a Detainee* (<http://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/sites/detentionwatchnetwork.org/files/florence_booklet_12.22.2010.pdf>)

Films: Shari Robertson and Michael Camerini, *Well-Founded Fear* (<http://vimeo.com/46476690>)

Assigned: Asylum Application (5 Points)

**Weeks 13-16 The Lost Boys of Sudan**

Readings: TBA

Films: Tommy Walker and Christopher Dillon Quinn, *God Grew Tired of Us*

BBC, *Return of the Lost Boys of Sudan*

Assigned: Short Assignment TBA

**Last Day of Classes = May 6, 2015**

**Remaining Events Assignments will be Due by May 1st**

**Group and Class Projects Due, Including Individual Portfolios will be due on May 6**



