**First-Year Seminar Proposal**

***Human Rights for Beginners***

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***Course Access & Accommodation:***

***We all learn and process information in different ways and I would like to make this course as accessible as possible. If there is something I can do to facilitate your learning in this class, please communicate this to me in advance. I will do my best to address your needs. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on a disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. You also can register with Student Life Disability Services to establish reasonable accommodations. After registration, talk with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact: slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307;*** [***slds.osu.edu***](http://slds.osu.edu/)***; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th* Avenue.**

**The Student Advocacy Center** is committed to helping students navigate Ohio State's structure and to resolving issues that they encounter at the university. SAC’s aim is to empower students to overcome obstacles to their growth both inside and outside the classroom. <http://advocacy.osu.edu/>

**Counseling and Consultation Services** provides services to currently enrolled undergraduate, graduate and professional students through individual & group counseling, psychiatrists, nutritional counseling, couples counseling, outreach, workshops, crisis debriefing, and community referrals.<http://www.ccs.ohio-state.edu/>

**Course Description:**

From global activism against modern day slavery to the Black Lives Matter movement, human rights continue to be a central social and political concern.  In this seminar we will learn about the historical roots of the idea of “human rights”, question how human rights are recognized and protected, and consider several examples of contemporary claims for human rights. We will read, watch, and reflect on multiple forms of information including primary legal documents, philosophy, personal accounts, visual art, activist strategies, journalism, and academic scholarship.

**Course Goals:**

* To provide a basic understanding of human rights.
* To introduce the controversial legal and cultural dimensions to human rights.
* To facilitate reflection on contemporary human rights problems.
* To engage students in multiple forms of intellectual inquiry including critical thinking, self-reflection, concise writing, and visualizations.

**Grading and Assignments:**

Students will be graded on a S/U basis.  Criteria for satisfactory performance include: weekly attendance (only one excused absence allowed without penalty); engagement in course discussions and activities; and completion of assignments. Class time will include a combination of mini lectures, group discussion, peer dialogue, writing bursts, and idea visualizations.

*Evaluation:*

Attendance & Participation 25%

This class is a bonus! I assume that everyone signed-up because they want to learn more about human rights, to be a part of an intimate class setting, and to have some fun. I come to class ready to be a part of our collective and expect students to have read and be ready to jump in to our discussion. Attendance refers to the presence of your warm body in class. Participation refers to your active presence in the class through verbal communication, group work, and attentive listening. Life happens, and so I allow for **one** excused absence during the semester.

Assignments 50%

Each section of the class has one assignment. I will provide details in class about what each assignment entails and when they are due.

Human Rights Case Study 25%

Students can work individually or in groups to conduct a short project on a current human rights concern.  In your work, you should address some of the main issues raised during the semester, including the problem of defining and protecting human rights, the question of universality, different ways to adjudicate human rights violations, the difference between absolute and relative rights, among others. You will post your project on our Canvas site before class so that everyone can see/listen to them before class. More details regarding this assignment will be provided.

***\*\* All readings will be available on our Canvas course site.***

**Academic Misconduct**

Academic misconduct includes plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Any source (e.g., book, article, or website) that you use in your reviews, paper, and oral presentation must be properly mentioned, even if you are paraphrasing rather than quoting directly. University policy requires instructors to report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the Committee on Academic Misconduct for investigation. For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct: <http://studentlife.osu.edu/edu/csc/>

**Course Plan:**

(15 weeks/one meeting per week)

*Weeks 1-3: What are human rights?*

* Assignment [due week 3]: Self-reflection on what makes you human

The concept of human rights is made up of two ideas – the human and rights. In this first section of the seminar we will reflect on the evolution of ideas regarding the human, rights, and finally human rights. This assignment asks you to write a reflection on the question: What makes you human? You will engage three core reasons for what makes you the “human” invoked in human rights. 500 words

* Readings:

-- Bartolomé de las Casas, “In Defense of the Indians,” from *The Peru Reader*, pp. 119-122. [https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/american-indians/resources/bartolomé-de-las-casas-debates-subjugation-indians-1550]

-- Lynn Hunt (2007). *Inventing Human Rights*. (skim chapter 1)

-- José-Manuel Barreto, 2013. “Decolonial Strategies and Dialogue in the Human Rights Field,” in *Human Rights from a Third World Perspective*, edited by José-Manuel Barreto.

*Weeks 4-6: Human Rights Machinery*

* Assignment [due week six]: Locating human rights concise writing assignment

In this section of the seminar we investigate where human rights norms are located. We will look at governmental and non-governmental locations. In this assignment, you will choose two locations where human rights work is happening and write a concise description and comparison. 750-1000 words

* References:

-- <http://www.ijrcenter.org/courts-monitoring-bodies/>

-- <https://www.hrw.org>

-- <https://www.newtactics.org>

-- <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Pages/Home.aspx>

-- Andrew Clapham (2015). *Human Rights: A Very Brief Introduction*. Chapter 3

Weeks 7-8: Are human rights universal?

* Assignment [due week 8]: Are human rights everywhere? Are they in Columbus and Ohio?

In this section of the seminar, we think about if human rights are universal. One way to think about that is to ask if they apply to all people, or if there are exceptions. This is a controversial dimension of human rights. Another way to look at this question is to find out if human rights are relevant in our local community. In this assignment, you will research Columbus, Ohio as a case study. Are there human rights here, if so, what or where are they, and if not, why? 750-1000 words

* Readings:

-- Zamani, Farinaz and Gerber, Paula (2014), “Burqa: Human Right or Human

Wrong?” *Alternative Law Journal*, 39(4):231-235.

-- Refer to this site on Human Rights Cities <http://www.pdhre.org/projects/hrcommun.html>

Weeks 9-11: Case Study on Human Trafficking

* Assignment [due week 11]: Visualizing our connections to human trafficking

Students will take the slavery footprint test. From that, they will choose some aspect of the results to research further how they are tied to human trafficking. This assignment both informs students about the problem of human trafficking and illustrates how human rights are interconnected. 750-1000 words

-- <http://slaveryfootprint.org>

* Readings:

-- Refer to Polaris Project <http://polarisproject.org>

-- watch *Dreamcatcher* (2014)

-- Refer to the U.S. Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report (2016)

<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/243557.pdf>

Weeks 12-13: Case Study on Black Lives Matter

* Assignment [due week 13]: Human rights critical thinking writing

If human rights are universal, then why do some groups have to claim their existence? This is a good question for many contemporary human rights claims, including Black Lives Matter. This assignment is a critical reflection, linking what we’ve learned about human rights and this contemporary example of human rights claims. 750-1000 words

* Readings:

-- Watch *3 ½ Minutes Ten Bullets* (2015).

-- Alicia Garza, [RadTalk.#LawForBlackLives Conference.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cniRNj6m0-A) August 1, 2015

<https://youtu.be/cniRNj6m0-A>

-- Umi Selah. [RadTalk. #LawForBlackLives Conference.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rchmWq1S0o0) August 1, 2015.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rchmWq1S0o0>

-- #BlackLivesMatter timeline <https://storify.com/MorganNemec/mizzou-protests>

Week 14-15: Human Rights Case Study Discussion

* Working individually or in groups, students will work on a human rights project. You can devise an ad campaign, write a letter to the editor, develop an advocacy event on campus, make a video or TedTalk, or other ideas. Any project will need to have a rationale about why you chose to focus on the topic and why you think the strategy used is most effective.