Human Rights in Global History

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Hist1810: Human Rights in Global History

HIST - 1810-01 / Fall 2018 / TR 1:15 – 2:30
Credit Hours: 3.0 / Administration Building 213

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Course Description

Human rights, an idea that has come to mean a set of core practices and values that society believes are inherent to each and every individual, was not a construct that sprang from a vacuum. In this course we will address the development of the term human rights, from ancient times through to the present day. As a class, we will focus on the religious, moral, and social implications of believing in such inalienable rights, the development of the concept of individual rights and responsibilities, the conflicts and complications that made contemporary human rights what they are, and the 20th and 21st century struggles that have pushed human rights near to a breaking point. In particular, the class will look at the definition of human rights, ancient societies’ ideas about social rights, the expanding construction of who deserved such rights, the development of a universalist ideology of human rights in the post-World War II age, civil war and genocide across the globe in the twentieth century, culture and the problems with universal applications of rights, and modern conceptions and defenses of human rights. We will also look at how organizations like the United Nations seek to police a western-centric concept of human rights.

As a history course covering a single topic on a global scale, this course will entail a significant amount of reading, and will focus on the tools and practices necessary for successful comprehension of historical materials, both in the primary and secondary form. Through this class, students will learn to differentiate between primary and
secondary historical sources, successfully deconstruct both sets of materials, and understand how to summarize and integrate individual sources with the larger historical narrative of human rights. The culminating project of this course, contributing to an article or stub on Wikipedia, will teach students to gather, evaluate, and synthesize research materials on a single topic. It will also enable students as knowledge producers. Finally, this course will rely solely on Open-Source Educational Materials, grounding the importance of the democratization of knowledge.

*Monday Office Hours will be held at Gracious Bakery (across from XU South, 1000 Jefferson Davis Parkway)

**Course Objectives**

*By the end of the course, students will be able to:*

- Identify silences in the historical record around human rights through an evaluation of existing Wikipedia articles
- Critically evaluate the legitimacy of existing human rights articles and stubs on Wikipedia
- Select an under-developed area of knowledge on Wikipedia based on their own areas of interest
- Participate in Peer review through an analysis of an existing Wikipedia entry
- Construct a bibliography of secondary and primary published resources on their chosen entry for Wikipedia
- Synthesize their collected research materials in preparation for their Wikipedia entry by identifying the key points for contribution in a sourced outline
- Write a coherent set of paragraphs to contribute to the public knowledge on their topic
- Observe the value added to human rights knowledge through their individual contribution to Wikipedia
- Summarize and critique primary and secondary sources of historical documentation through exercises, article writing, and presentation

**Course Requirements**

Regular Class Attendance and Participation

25%
Primary Document Exercises (7)  
25%  
Human Rights Project  
25%  
Mid-term Examination  
10%  
Final Presentation  
10%  
Final Examination  
5%

**Required Texts**

- All course materials will be made available on-line and free of charge. Provided primarily though internet links (as indicated on the syllabus) these materials will need to be brought to class on Thursdays. It is the student’s responsibility to either print these materials or have them accessible on a tablet or laptop (with .pdf reader; NOT a phone) for weekly class discussion. Please contact me if you have any questions about this policy.

**Class Attendance and Participation:** Active participation in discussions and class activities (held on **Thursdays** unless otherwise noted) constitutes a significant portion of your grade. You will be expected to come to class with all the required materials and ready to discuss the issues covered in both the reading for that week and the previous lectures. Taking notes on the material is highly recommended. Also, please review the question posed for each week’s reading. As all the readings will be due on Thursdays, it is highly advisable that you begin your work for the week ahead of time.

In regards to grading for attendance and participation, your efforts will be evaluated on a point system. During lecture classes, you can receive up to two points per class. Your physical presence will grant you a single point; demonstrating that you are awake, alert, and processing information will grant you a second point. Total points possible are 26. During discussion classes, a total of six points can be awarded. Again, physical presence will account for only a minimal amount of points; the remainder will be awarded on the basis of the following attributes: level of attentiveness and alertness (i.e. paying attention, taking notes, and not being distracted by your cell phone); contribution to class topic; engagement with fellow
students; respect for fellow students; completion of reading workshop activity. Total points possible is 72. Additional points may be available as extra-credit over the course of the semester. Overall participation will be graded out of 100 possible points (begun at 100 on Brightspace at the start of the semester and subtracted from over the course of the semester for absences / poor participation).

**Note:** Each week you will be responsible for completing three elements for Thursday's class. 1) Complete the reading and come to class prepared to discuss the material. You MUST have the reading materials with you in class on Thursdays. 2) Print, complete, and bring to class the primary source exercise or PDE (7 out of a possible 9 weeks). It will be used to develop class discussion and activities, along with your integrated reading responses, and it will be graded. You will be required to complete seven of these over the course of the semester. 3) Complete any and all Wikipedia-based project assignments.

**Primary Document Exercise:** This exercise will be completed seven weeks out of a possible ten weeks as noted on the syllabus. They will cover the PRIMARY source reading (indicated below in the syllabus each week with a (P). The reading and the activity should be brought to class and will be used to facilitate discussion. There will be nine opportunities to complete this exercise and you must complete at least seven of them. More information will be provided in class and on Brightspace.

**Human Rights Project:** Students will complete a final project for the class that will be both written and presented in the final week of the semester. Students will chose an existing Wikipedia stub or article relative to human rights to edit and/or expand upon. They will then conduct research on the topic, construct a draft and final version of the stub or article, and prepare a five minute audio / visual presentation on the article and the process. Topics will be chosen by students and approved by the instructor. Research should gathered from reputable academic sources. More information on the project will be available on Brightspace, WikiEdu Dashboard, and presented in class. The project will be broken down into the following parts and be worth a total of 370 points (not including the final presentation). With the exception of the two in-class tasks, assignments are due no later than 11:59 pm on the date indicated. For every day the assignment is later (up to five) a single point will be subtracted from the overall grade.

**Components:**

- Getting Started on Wikipedia (Due 8-23) – 20 points
Midterm Examination: The midterm examination will be administered on October 4th during the class period, and will cover all materials from readings, lectures and discussions up to that point.

Final Presentation: Students will prepare final presentations for class periods on November 28 and 30 on their Wikipedia projects. The presentations will be worth 100 points. More information will be provided in class and on Brightspace.

Final Examination: The final examination will be administered during the scheduled exam time for the course (available online). It will be a two-hour essay examination. Students going into the final with an A in the class will have the option of not taking the final exam.

Policies

Attendance: Class attendance is mandatory. In addition to the points system indicated above, Xavier University policy dictates that absences in excess of twice the number of weekly meetings (in this case, five) will result in a grade of FE (Failure due to excessive absences). If you are not present for the roll at the beginning of class, you must inform me of your presence after class. (I do not rely on the card reader for attendance purposes.) It is your responsibility to keep track of your attendance and all concerns about absences must be addressed before
submission of final grades at the end of the semester. Attendance includes both your physical and mental presence. Absences on days marked by an L (or unmarked) will result in the loss of two points from your final participation grade. Absences on days marked by a D (including laboratory days) will result in the loss of six points.

**Lateness:** Do not arrive late to class. It is disrespectful not only to me, but to your fellow students who are attempting to concentrate on the material. Arriving more than ten minutes late will result in an absence for that day’s class. Consistent tardiness will also affect your participation grade.

**In-class comportment:** I expect you to arrive to class on time and be ready to listen, discuss and take notes when class begins. **All cell phones** should be put away unless otherwise instructed. If you choose to utilize your cell phone during class – either in the form of a conversation or a text message – you will be asked to leave the classroom. In addition, I expect that you will take care of all issues before coming to class, allowing you to sit attentively for the entirety of the class.

**Late assignments / makeups:** Extensions for primary document exercises and project assignments will be granted only with valid justification and prior discussion with the instructor. I do not accept late assignments. Please contact me **before** the assignment is due if you feel you cannot complete the work. Feel free to contact me with any questions regarding assignments, exams and/or grading for this class.

**Grading:** I place significant emphasis on improvement over the course of the class, meaning your efforts to improve your performance will benefit your overall grade. If your grades consistently improve over the course of the semester and if your class presence is consistent and attentive, I will consider shifting our final grade up to the next level. For example, if your final grade in the course worked out to a 78, but your grades had consistently improved during the semester and were an active class participant, I would consider shifting your grade to a B.

**Availability:** In addition to my office hours, I am available for appointments with students. If you are experiencing problems or feel it would be helpful to speak to me, please do not hesitate to contact me via email or phone and I would be happy to set up an appointment with you at our mutual convenience.

**Honor code and plagiarism:** Academic honesty is expected of all students at Xavier. Your responsibilities as a Xavier student include being familiar with the
honor system and the plagiarism policy of the University. If you are unfamiliar with what constitutes plagiarism I recommend you take this quiz: [http://www.indiana.edu/~tedfrick/plagiarism/index2.html](http://www.indiana.edu/~tedfrick/plagiarism/index2.html). The Honor Code of Xavier University states that “students are personally responsible for their work, their actions, and their word.” This policy incorporates all forms of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism is a particularly egregious offense in a history course. It is defined as “unacknowledged or falsely acknowledged presentation of another person's ideas, expressions, or original research as one's own work. Such an act often gives the reader the impression that the student has written or thought something that he or she has in fact borrowed from another. Any paraphrasing or quotation must be appropriately acknowledged.” Cases of cheating or plagiarism will be reported to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences according to the procedures established in the Academic Integrity Policy (found at: [http://www.xula.edu/cas/index.php](http://www.xula.edu/cas/index.php)) and may result in a failing grade, academic probation and/or sanction, or expulsion.

**Students with disabilities:** Xavier University seeks to provide accommodations for students with disabilities. Students should contact the Office of Disability Services (Building 15, 520 – 7315), for assistance and the appropriate paper work should be then filed with the Dean and forwarded to the appropriate professors.

**Hurricane Preparedness Policy:** As we live in the Gulf Coast in the wake of Katrina, it is important to have a hurricane emergency policy. Students should be familiar with Xavier University’s Hurricane Emergency Plan. Continuation of this course in the event of such an emergency will follow the dictates of university administrators and students should maintain contact via both email and Brightspace.

**Class Schedule**

**Part I: Introduction to Human Rights**

**Week One: What are Human Rights?**

Tuesday August 21: Introduction to the Course / Syllabus Review / Topics Territories (L)

Thursday August 23: Defining Human Rights / Primary Sources & PDEs (D)

*Primary Reading:*

Secondary Reading or Video:

- A Short History of Human Rights @ http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/edumat/hreduseries/hereandnow/Part-1/short-history.htm

Questions: What does the term human rights mean to you as a U.S. citizen? As a citizen of the world? How do you think these “universal” rights came about?

Wikipedia Assignment: Getting Started on Wikipedia
(No Primary Document Exercise)

Week Two: How are Human Rights a Part of History?
Tuesday August 28: Background on Human Rights and Reading History (L)
Thursday August 30: Ancient Rules and Contemporary Human Rights (D)

Primary Reading:

- Code of Hammurabi @ http://avalon.law.yale.edu/ancient/hamframe.asp

Secondary Reading


Questions: Why would a society propose a set of standards by which all should behave? What would be the purpose? What does it mean to be a moral being?


Part II: Developing a Concept of Individual Rights

Week Three: “Rights,” Religion and Ancient Societies
Tuesday September 4: Ancient Societies and Rights and Responsibilities (L)
Thursday September 6: Religion and Human Rights in the Ancient World (D)

CLASS IN LIBRARY – 5th FLOOR COMPUTER LAB!!!!

Primary Reading:
Secondary Reading:

- Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics @ http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/aristotle-niceth.asp

Questions: How does happiness relate to a common concept of human rights? Is there an overarching idea of how people should act based on ancient ideals of a good life?

Wikipedia Assignment: Add to an Article

Week Four: The Enlightenment and a New Concept of Rights

Tuesday September 11: Challenging Absolute Rights through Revolutionary Thought (L)
Thursday September 13: Writing Exercise / Discussion: Citizenship (D)

Primary Reading:


Secondary Reading or Video:


Extra Credit Article:


Questions: What is the connection between empathy and human rights? How did novel writers and philosophers contribute to the development of human rights? What did citizenship mean during this time? What is a social contract and how is it connected to rights?

Wikipedia Discussion Assignment (10 points): Read the section: What is a Content Gap?; Pick a Possible Article or Stub for your project (Print and bring to class).

Week Five: Revolution - England, France, Haiti, and the United States

Tuesday September 18: Egalité for All (Film - L)
Thursday September 20: The Meaning of Revolution Around the Atlantic World (D)

*Primary Reading:*

- Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen @ [http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/295/](http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/295/)
- Toussaint L’Ouverture, “To Live Free or Die” @ [https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/2650-to-live-free-or-die-on-the-anniversary-of-the-haitian-revolution](https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/2650-to-live-free-or-die-on-the-anniversary-of-the-haitian-revolution)

*(READ ALL; Choose ONE for PD)*

*Secondary Reading:*


*Questions:* What is the connection between public torture and the development of human rights? What are the origins of revolution and how do these new kinds of thinking connect to human rights? How do we reconcile what European and U.S. thinkers proclaimed vs. what Haitians claimed in regards to rights and citizenship? How does race play into the discussion about rights?

*Wikipedia Discussion Assignment* (10 points): Read section: *Thinking about Sources and Plagiarism*; Find and print an example of plagiarism *(not* a definition of plagiarism) on the Internet for class

**Week Six: Consequences of Revolutions**

- Tuesday September 25: Exclusionary Rights (L)
- Thursday September 27: Those Left Behind (D)

*Primary Reading*

- Petition of the Jews @ [http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/286/](http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/286/)
- Olympe de Gouges, Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen [https://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/293/](https://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/293/)
- Slaves Petition for Freedom @ [http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6237/](http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6237/)

*(READ ALL; Choose ONE for PDE)*

*Secondary Reading:*

Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.
Questions: Why do you think it was possible for Europeans to only consider the rights of some? Who specifically was excluded? Do you think it was easier for some groups to gain rights than others?

Wikipedia Assignment: Choose your topic / Find Your Sources

Week Seven: Midterm Examination
- Tuesday October 2: Midterm Review
- Thursday October 4: Midterm Examination
Reading: None / No Primary Document Exercise; Study for Exam!

Week Eight: The Holocaust and the (Slow) Development of Modern Human Rights
- Tuesday October 9: The Origins of the Holocaust and World War II (L)
- Thursday October 11: Holocaust Discussion (D)

Primary Reading:
- Laws for the Protection of Hereditary Health (1933) [https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/law-for-the-protection-of-hereditary-health]
- Inside a Nazi Death Camp (1944) [http://www.eyewitnesshistory.com/maidanek.htm]
- Account of a Nazi Massacre [http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1942graebe.html]

(READ ALL; Choose ONE for PD)

Secondary Reading/Video:
- Khan Academy - The Holocaust: [https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/world-history/euro-hist/human-rights/v/the-holocaust]

Questions: Where does justification for global dominance (like that of the Nazi Party) come from? At what point is there a global responsibility for such actions? Why do you think countries were reluctant to fight and willing to ignore?

Wikipedia Assignment: Academic Article Outline
Week Nine:
Tuesday October 16: NO CLASS - FALL BREAK
Thursday October 18: CLASS IN LIBRARY - 5th FLOOR COMPUTER LAB!!!! (D)
Wikipedia Assignment: Article Outline

Week Ten: The Creation of the United Nations
Tuesday October 23: The (Re)Construction of an International Police Force (L)
Thursday October 25: The Viability of Culpability and International Codes (D)
Primary Reading:
- Nuremberg Code http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/nurecode.asp

Secondary Reading/Video:
- Fundamental Freedoms Video: http://www.eyewitnessstohistory.com/maidanek.htm

Questions: How do you deal with atrocities after the fact? What changed in the post-war era? What does it mean to give consent? How is this connected to ideas of citizenship?
Wikipedia Assignment: Draft Article

Part III: Modern Forms of Terror and Human Rights

Week Eleven: Universalism vs. Relativism, Sovereignty vs. Peace
Tuesday October 30: The Origins of a Crisis of Rights in the Middle East (L)
Thursday November 1: The Limits of Human Rights Legislation (D)
Primary Reading:
- UN General Assembly Resolution 181 @ https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/7F0AF2BD897689B785256C330061D253

(READ BOTH; Choose ONE for PD)
Secondary Reading:

- "Cultural Relativism and Universal Human Rights" @ http://www.jstor.org/stable/762182
- Sam Harris’ Ted Talk: https://www.ted.com/talks/sam_harris_science_can_show_what_s_right

Questions: What are the origins of the Palestine-Israel conflict? What are the inherent contradictions in the creation of the Israeli state after WWII? What are some of the inherent contradictions in the issue of human rights period? Can you imagine a situation in which something you perceived as rights-denial might be cultural practice? What happens then?

Wikipedia Assignment: Peer Review

Week Twelve: Africa, the Legacies of Colonialism and Military Regimes of Genocide

Tuesday November 6: Dictatorships, Civil War, and Violence (L)
Thursday November 8: Colonial Legacies and Unrest in Africa (D)

CLASS IN LIBRARY - 5TH FLOOR COMPUTER LAB!!!!

Primary Reading:

- President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia: African Development and Foreign Aid @ http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/mod/1966Kaunda-africadev1.asp

(READ BOTH; Choose ONE for PD)

Secondary Reading:

- Fatoumata Waggeh, Africa Post-Colonial Development https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7lmz4UL4wE

Questions: What are the legacies of colonialism in Africa? What are the origins of civil strife and ethnic violence that have resulted in major human rights violations? What are the potential solutions?

Wikipedia Assignment: Respond to Peer Review

Week Thirteen:

Tuesday November 13: The Benefits of Bearing Witness (L)
Thursday November 15: Modern Human Rights Abuses and Solutions? (D)
Primary Reading: NONE

Secondary Reading


Questions: Is the international community responsible for taking action at the very first indication of dictatorship and potential human rights violations? When is a “good time” to step in? What good, if any, is the UN police force?

(No Primary Document Exercise)

Tuesday November 20: No Class – Work on your presentations!!!
Thursday November 22 - No Class - Thanksgiving Break

Wikipedia Assignment: Submit Wikipedia Article (Due 11/24)

Tuesday November 27: Presentations (L)
Thursday November 29: Presentations (L)

(L) = Lecture; (D) = Discussion

Final Exam: Friday December 7, 2018 @ 1:30 pm

HIST1810: HUMAN RIGHTS IN GLOBAL HISTORY

HIST - 1810-01 / Fall 2018 / TR 1:15 - 2:30
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I have read and agree to the terms of the attached syllabus. By remaining in this class I agree to abide by the policies established in this syllabus. If I have any questions or concerns, I will first consult the syllabus and then contact the professor. If I lose the syllabus, I will immediately print another from Brightspace.

Print Name:

Preferred Name: