

POL 412H: Human Rights Politics and International Relations
Winter 2022
Tu 12-2

Professor: W. Wong
Office hours: on Zoom, info on Quercus

Prerequisites:

This is an advanced seminar on the theories and politics of human rights in international and domestic politics. In addition to the requirements stated in the Calendar, you should be able to complete and understand approximately 70 pages of reading for each meeting. The course will proceed quickly through a wide range of topics, some of which are analytically and conceptually difficult (and most of the time, important). Although an intimate knowledge of case(s) is not required, an interest in learning about human rights violations and/or resolutions to violations is an absolute must.

The course is student-driven, and therefore anyone who wants to take the course should be prepared to actively engage with others in the course, and prepare to discuss the readings and topics in class. As instructor, I will be giving a few introductory remarks to guide the course, and facilitating discussion. The size of the class means that there is more interaction between students and with the instructor – take advantage!

Purpose of the Course:

This course is designed to provide a theoretical and analytical overview of major issues in the study and practice of human rights with a mix of international, systems perspectives and domestically-focused research. The course is geared for those who want a broad knowledge of human rights throughout the world, but students will have the opportunity to examine topics in human rights more closely. The knowledge of international and domestic constraints that students are exposed to in the first half of the course will help them grapple with the applications of human rights in the second half. The goal here is to introduce students to ways of thinking about human rights as a product and limitation of state action, and how human rights have become dominant in international politics since the end of World War II. The process of creating and implementing human rights is political. Students will also be exposed to how international ideals are applied on the ground by countries, non-state actors, and individuals. The course is also designed to force students to question their assumptions, and justify their arguments for or against action in the name of human rights. As such, students are encouraged to engage in lively conversations.

Readings:

Readings are available via links through the syllabus posted online or through Quercus. In addition to the weekly readings described below, there will be three books that form part of the “Book Club” in this course. Students may want to purchase the title they choose, since they will be reading one title cover to cover. All of the titles can be accessed through the library as well. Please note that you are expected to keep pace with the reading schedule.

[Sikkink, Kathryn](#). 2017. *Evidence for Hope: Making Human Rights Work in the 21st Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (KS)

[Hopgood, Stephen](#). 2013. *The Endtimes of Human Rights*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. (SH)

[Bob, Clifford](#). 2019. *Rights as Weapons*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (CB)

How this Course Works:

This administration of the course will be conducted entirely on Quercus, which means that you are required to check the course site regularly for any assignments, announcements, readings, and group-based assignments. Because of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, we must be prepared to conduct this course entirely online for health and safety reasons. You are required to keep on top of Quercus announcements, find information about online sessions, and attend the class sessions throughout the semester.

You must have a utoronto.ca account to access Quercus (please go to Robarts Library if you do not already have an account). It is your responsibility to log into Quercus to access the information posted regarding the course.

Course Requirements:

In this course, you will be evaluated on the basis of an in-class presentation and reading summary; a critical book review; a group video and response to another video; a short paper; and your participation in class. The breakdown of your course grade is as follows:

Book club check in (due week 5)	10%
In-class presentation and summary	15%
Critical book review (due week 10)	35%
Group video (due April 4, noon EST) (Response due April 7, 5pm EST)	25%
Participation	15%

All students' course grades will be given based on his/her/their performance on the assignments in the course, according to the above percentages. There are NO exceptions.

Your attendance in seminar is absolutely crucial to your success in this course. Missing more than two seminar meetings will result in a 50 point reduction of your Participation grade. If you do not show up the day for which you have an In-class Presentation, you will receive a 0% for that assignment.

All assignments are *absolutely necessary*. You should not take the course if you do not think you can successfully complete these assignments.

Assignment Descriptions:

Book club check in: 10%

To encourage you to keep up with the reading schedule, you will be asked to submit a 2-3 page book response approximately the halfway point through your book. In your response, you should identify the book's main argument and reflect on how the book relates to our discussions so far in the course. You should also identify any questions or confusions that you have so far in your reading of the book, and anything you hope that the book might accomplish in the second half of the book.

In-class presentation: 15%

You will prepare a 300-word summary of the reading, due by 6pm the day before your presentation, to be posted on the Quercus discussion board. This assignment asks you to be a critical reader: you will offer a quick synopsis of a given reading, distilling the main point (what's the basic argument?) and describe the evidence given by the author(s). Do you find their evidence credible? Are there other readings (or other sources) that tell you otherwise? As a guide, your summary should be no more than 2 minutes when presented orally.

Please note, to preserve consistent formatting, please provide the *last name(s)* of the authors of the piece you are presenting, as well as the year of publication, in the title of your post.

For the presentation itself, *you will work as a group to come up with a meme that encapsulates what you see as one or more of the main points from the week's reading.* Not everything will fit – so in the presentation, you will show the meme, and explain what parts of the reading fit into your meme, and what gets left out. You can also use this opportunity to explain what you think is missing from the readings themselves. You may draw on the three readings from our

Your presentations will offer food for thought for the rest of the day's meeting. **The presentation mark will be based on the performance of the group's meme/explanation and your contribution to the group's overall performance (50%), and your summary quality (50%).**

Critical book review: 35%

The Book Club provides students with an opportunity to engage an entire book during the semester. You are encouraged to see both the strengths and weaknesses of the author you choose, and think about how you might think about the world, given your own reading of the material for this course. The Book Club should form an essential part of your engagement with the course and you are encouraged to discuss each work. This paper will be based on whichever book you have chosen from the Book Club as a way to develop your ideas. Assignment details will be made available later in the term. *Length: 7-8 pages*

Group video: 25%

As part of our Virtual Conference to cap off the course, you will be making a video on the topic "The Future of Human Rights." This is a **group-based 10-minute video project**. You will have Week 11 off from class to work on and refine your project.

Using class materials, you are to make a video in which you address the question: *What is the future of human rights?* Throughout this course, you have seen multiple answers to the question. Where do you stand? Why? In the video, present the best evidence from the course to respond

to this question. You should employ readings from *at least* 3 weeks of the class. **The video is worth 75% of this portion of the grade.**

You can be as creative as possible with your presentation by including different forms of multimedia. While this is meant to be a scholarly and evidence-based presentation, you will also be assessed on the creativity and originality of your presentation. Criteria for the evaluation of this assignment will include: the originality of the contribution in relation to analysis, critical thinking and global understanding; the effectiveness of the knowledge translation and mobilization from policy brief to video presentation; and the creativity of the presentation.

The other 25% of this mark is a response to another group's video. You will provide friendly but critical feedback for the video you evaluate. The response is expected to identify the strengths of the presentation, ask meaningful questions of the presenters, provide constructive criticism, and identify potential gaps. Where relevant, the discussant should relate his/her/their comments to the content of the course. Write-ups should be approximately 800 words. Criteria for the evaluation of this assignment will include: the extent of meaningful engagement with the presentation; the quality of the feedback; the connections made between the presentation and broader course themes. You will post these to the discussion thread for the relevant video.

Videos will be due April 4 at noon EST so that students can have time to write responses by April 7, 5pm EST. Further details, including submission instructions, will be provided at a later date.

Participation: 15%

In such a small class, if I do not know your name and what you have contributed to the seminar by the end of the course, this part of your grade will suffer. You should plan to speak up at least once per class meeting to maintain a B+ mark or higher in this category. This means: asking for more information, asking for clarifications, and making comments, but also referring to the reading and making connections, offering analysis, etc.

The class has a “Book Club”: all students will choose one of three books to read (above) in their entirety, according to the order outlined in the Schedule of Topics and Readings. You will meet with others reading the same book on a regular basis to talk about what you learned, and the class will meet more generally to talk about what we have learned in each week of reading the books.

You cannot adequately participate if you do not do all of the reading! Your grade will be affected if it is clear that you are not keeping up with the assigned readings per week. If necessary, reading quizzes will be given.

Accessibility Concerns:

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, call (416) 978- 8060, email accessibility.services@utoronto.ca, or visit <http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca> for detailed information.

All of the course material for POL208 will be posted on Quercus. Any audio/video recordings of lectures will be uploaded to Quercus, along with their transcription. If you require other accommodations, please contact your TA.

Grade Appeals:

If you are unhappy with a grade on an assignment, you may submit a written appeal to your professor, explaining why you feel your grade on an assignment is unjustified. **You must submit this written appeal no later than two weeks after your assignment is returned.** Be warned: no regrades result in an automatic increase in the grade, as assignments must be evaluated anew. Your grade may stay the same, go up, or go down.

Please note: changes to student grades on assignments will only be considered if there is *demonstrable* clerical error in the calculation of a particular score. **You must submit a written appeal** in order to have a grade reevaluated.

Other Course Policies:

Please read the following carefully. By registering in this course, you agree to abide by the rules below:

- 1) All work must be submitted via Quercus in order to avoid penalty. There are no exceptions. No assignments will be accepted via Zoom, email, fax, or any other means *but* Quercus. You must be able to access Quercus for this course.
 - a. Unless otherwise stated, all times refer to Eastern Standard Time (EST).
- 2) All assignments have due dates and percentages as detailed in this syllabus. Any changes in due dates (if applicable) will be announced on Quercus. If there are no updates announced on Quercus, your assignments are due in accordance with the details outlined in the syllabus.
- 3) You must submit the Academic Integrity Checklist with your essay-based work. See #11-13.
- 4) The global pandemic has exerted extra pressures on us all. Students, faculty, and TAs alike are dealing with extra burdens, stresses, and possible illness. As such, the late policy for the course assignments is:
 - a. A no-questions asked, 3 business day extension for the *book club check-in* and *critical book review*. To get this extension, fill out this form (also on Quercus) in advance of the stated deadline.
 - b. There are no extensions for the *in-class presentation and summaries* or the *group video*, due to their group nature. If you do not have the individual components of the term paper draft, you can still receive credit for participating in reviewing your peers' work. The automatic penalty for missing any individual elements of the *in-class presentation and summaries* and *group video* is 25 points, which will be assessed once the group component of your work is evaluated. You will receive a zero on these assignments if you skip the group and individual components.
 - c. "Business day" begins and ends at the stated time the assignment is due. For example, if the assignment is due at 12pm EST, each business day is counted

from that time. That means that, even if the due date has been extended, the time by which the assignment must be received will stay the same.

- d. If you fill out the form after the stated deadline, but before the end of the 3 business day extension period, you will incur a per day late penalty (see #5) until you fill in the form. You will also “lose” the extension days, in whole or in part, up until you filed the form. For example, if you fill in the extension form one day after the assignment is due, your no-questions asked extension is now only 2 business days. If you fill in the extension form one hour after the original stated deadline, you will also “lose” the entire business day.
 - e. If you do not fill in the form within the period of 3 business days after the stated due date, you will incur a late penalty (see #5) and your assignment will not get comments.
 - f. 3 business days means that if your assignment’s stated deadline is Monday, the extension gives you until Thursday to turn it in with no penalty.
 - g. You cannot request an extension after the 3 business days post-state due date has ended. For example, if the deadline is Monday, you cannot ask for an extension on the Thursday.
- 5) The late penalty is 2 points per day, in whole or in part, starting immediately after the hour and day of the stated deadline. For example, if you turn in an assignment at 9pm the day it is due, you will incur a late penalty of -2 on your assignment. Turning it in the day after the stated deadline will incur you a penalty of -4, and so on.
- a. The late penalty applies to all assignments in the course, including the group assignments, except as outlined in #4.
- 6) From time to time, we may distribute surveys intended to help us better design the course or evaluate assignments. Please help us by filling out the forms.
- 7) All at-home assignments are to be typed, 12-point Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1” (2.5 cm) margins. *You must use PDF format.*
- 8) You cannot “make up” missed assignments (group or individual) with alternative assignments. If you have reasons for not attending a class (trips, appointments, etc.), you should talk to the professor in advance.
- 9) Office hour etiquette: if you make an appointment to talk to the professor, please cancel with a minimum 12 hours’ notice so that other students can take your place. Even though these will be virtual meetings, your professor does make the time to meet with you and it is common courtesy to cancel if you no longer need the meeting. Other students may want a meeting and no-shows are discourteous to everyone.
- 10) Absence policy: Please file your Absence Declaration on ACORN: <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/covid19-artsci-student-faqs#fw2021-absence-declaration-accordion-2> and email your professor that you have done so.
- 11) **ACADEMIC HONESTY:** Individual assignments are meant to evaluate your comprehension and progress within the course. It is the expectation that you will submit work that is original and your own. There are many group elements to the course, including soliciting feedback from peers to complete individual assignments. It is important that while others might give you feedback, what you present under your own name is something you have come up with, with or without the assistance of others. This applies to *all* individual assignments. By extension, your group assignments are meant to reflect the efforts of your immediate group and all of your individual contributions to a

collective outcome. Group assignments should reflect the efforts that you have collectively made *within your group*.

- 12) **ACADEMIC HONESTY:** When you use other people's words and ideas, you must properly cite them, whether these words come from the readings, the Internet, or in class. Failing to do so constitutes plagiarism, and is a very serious academic offense. Please consult the professor if you have any questions. For further clarification and information on plagiarism please see Writing at the University of Toronto <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources>.
- 13) **ACADEMIC HONESTY:** All individual, essay-based assignments will require the submission of the Academic Integrity Checklist to reflect your understanding #10 and #11 above. **Read this carefully.** You can be held accountable to any of the factors you check off in your assignment. The Checklist is available on Quercus.
- 14) **Final grades are final.** Please do not try to negotiate your grade with the instructor or your TA. Grades are calculated according to the above percentages, assessing your performance on all of the class assignments. **THEY ARE NOT ARBITRARY.** You should ask for help *before* an assignment – we are always happy to answer your questions. Making the effort before the grades are turned in will always be more beneficial to you than making the case afterward for why you need extra points.
- 15) **All of the work produced in this class is for this class, only. Do not share any of the material other students have uploaded, including videos or written materials, with anyone outside of the course. Do not record the seminar meetings.**

Schedule of Topics and Readings:

UNIT 1: What are we studying?

Discussion questions to begin:

- How can we define a human being?
- What gives us rights?
- How do we know when something is a right versus an ideal?
- Does law enable or disable discussion? Why?
- Are human rights actually universal, or is that a political move?

Week 1: Orientation

Welcome!

READINGS

[Knoppers, Bartha Maria and Henry T. Greely](#). "Biotechnologies Nibbling at the Legal 'Human.'" *Science* 1455-1457.

[Wilford, John Noble](#). "Almost Human, and Sometimes Smarter." *New York Times*. April 7, 2007.

[Wilk, Elvia](#). "What AI Can Teach Us About the Myth of Human Genius." *The Atlantic*. March 28, 2021.

Week 2: What are Human Rights?

READINGS

Chapter 1 of KS, Chapter 1 of CB, Chapter 1 of SH

Andrea Paras. Forthcoming. “Rights.” *The Oxford Handbook of History and International Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[Ingram, James D.](#) 2008. “What is a ‘Right to have Rights’? Three Images of the Politics of Human Rights.” *The American Political Science Review* 102 (4): 401-416.

Podcast: Follow-up Questions “The Future of the History of Rights” (with guest Prof. Andrea Paras, University of Guelph)

Week 3: What are the Politics of Human Rights?

READINGS

Chapter 2 of KS, Chapter 2, 3 of CB, Chapter 2, 3 of SH

[Carpenter, R. Charli.](#) 2007. “Setting the Advocacy Agenda: Theorizing Issue Emergence and Nonemergence in Transnational Advocacy Networks.” *International Studies Quarterly* 51 (1): 99-120.

[Wong, Wendy H, and Eileen A Wong.](#) 2020. “What COVID-19 Revealed About Health, Human Rights, and the WHO.” *Journal of Human Rights* 19 (5): 568–81.

Recommended: [Moravscik, Andrew.](#) 2000. “The Origins of Human Rights Regimes: Democratic Delegation in Postwar Europe.” *International Organization* 54 (2): 217-252.

Week 4: International Human Rights Law

READINGS

Chapter 3 of KS, Chapter 4 of CB, Chapter 4 of SH

[Simmons, Beth A. and Anton Strezhnev.](#) 2017. “Human Rights and Human Welfare: Looking for a “Dark Side” to International Human Rights Law.” In *Human Rights Futures*. Ed. Stephen Hopgood, Jack Snyder, and Leslie Vinjamuri. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 60-87.

[Hafner-Burton, Emilie M.](#) 2012. “International Regimes for Human Rights.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 15: 265-286.

UNIT 2: Who is Responsible?

Discussion questions to begin:

What are states? What are non-state actors?

Who are the legitimate agents of change for “making” human rights?

When are some kinds of actors more effective at making human rights than others?

How do non-state actors fit into the Westphalian model of international relations?

How do states affect one another's policies on human rights?
Are states "more responsible" for human rights?

Week 5: The Role of States

READINGS

Chapter 4 of KS, Chapter 5 of CB, Chapter 5 of SH

[Kelley, Judith G. and Beth A. Simmons](#). 2014. "Politics by Number: Indicators as Social Pressure in International Relations." *American Journal of Political Science* 59 (1): 55-70.

[Wahl, Rachel](#). 2017. *Just Violence: Torture and Human Rights in the Eyes of the Police*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. Introduction, Chapter 2.

Week 6: Intergovernmental organizations

READINGS

Chapter 5 of KS, Chapter 6 of CB, Chapter 6 of SH

[Greenhill, Brian](#). 2010. "The Company You Keep: International Socialization and the Diffusion of Human Rights Norms." *International Studies Quarterly* 54 (1): 127-145.

[Ayoub, Phillip M](#). 2013. "Cooperative transnationalism in contemporary Europe: Europeanization and political opportunities for LGBT mobilization in the European Union." *European Political Science Review* 5 (2): 279-310.

Week 7: (International) nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)

READINGS

Chapter 6 of KS, Chapter 7 of CB, Chapter 7 of SH

[Pruce, Joel R. and Alexandra Cosima Budabin](#). 2016. "Beyond Naming and Shaming: New Modalities of Information Politics in Human Rights." *Journal of Human Rights* 15 (3): 408-425.

[Keck, Margaret E., and Kathryn Sikkink](#). 1998. *Activists Beyond Borders : Advocacy Networks in International Politics* Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press.

Podcast: Follow-up Questions "Human Rights NGOs and Beyond" (with guest Prof. Joel R. Pruce, University of Dayton)

Week 8: The Market

READINGS

Chapter 7 of KS, Chapter 8, 9 of CB, Chapter 8 of SH

[Barman, Emily](#). 2016. *Caring Capitalism: The Meaning and Measure of Social Value*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.

[Bartley, Tim and Curtis Child](#). 2014. "Shaming the Corporation: The Social Production of Targets and the Anti-Sweatshop Movement." *American Sociological Review* 79 (4): 653-679.

Week 9: Technology

READINGS

[Land, Molly K. and Jay D. Aronson](#). 2020. "Human Rights and Technology: New Challenges for Justice and Accountability." *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 16 (1): 223–40.

Wong, Wendy H. DRAFT. *Data You: Human Rights in the Digital Age*. Chapters TBA.

Week 10: Critical book review

Book review due in class

Week 11: Video work

Week 12: Videos and feedback due

Video due: April 4, noon EST

Response due: April 5, 5pm EST