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Comparative Issues in Human Rights

HMRT 3500 (4 Credits)

International Honors Program (IHP)
Human Rights: Movements, Power, and Resistance.

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description

This course is about learning from and making sense of the collective and individual efforts to struggle for human rights and resist against systemic and structural oppression in a multicultural context. It aims to create a space for critical comparative reflection and provide a conceptual toolbox for analyzing how human rights are exercised, negotiated and contested in the different locations we visit. However, rather than treating human rights as merely a universal normative framework enacted through national institutions of power (law, international law practitioners, bureaucracy, NGOs etc.) the course invites students to contemplate on the grassroots movements in a diverse set of political traditions that strive to mobilize power from the bottom up for a more democratic international human rights regime.

The course also examines various historical and contemporary practices of power that enable and violate human rights, with special attention to how processes of colonial, developmental and neoliberal capitalism, nation-states, and humanitarianism have shaped experiences of social exclusion, oppression, and dehumanization. Acknowledging that the most commonly heard history of human rights (which most often orients practices) is one that emerges from particular geographical and political contexts ("the West"), this course will ask questions that push us to consider different vantage points, destabilize commonly accepted narratives and welcome a multiplicity of perspectives. The course presents a set of themes in synch with each local program component and aims to reflect an analytical light on the first hand encounters with human rights actors that we will be meeting throughout the semester. In addition to the focus on power, the course also explores a range of themes related to resistance - indigenous resistance movements, violent and nonviolent movements for self-determination, a gendered analysis of human rights framework, refugee resilience and the challenges to the nation state etc. The aim is to encourage a collective discussion and learning environment through which we will explore the ideas proposed by a politicized understanding of human rights.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Comparatively analyze historical dynamics of power that shape local social hierarchies, forms of oppression and dehumanization.
- Analyze how experiences of colonialism, capitalism, development, and neoliberal globalization shape local human rights governance and resistance.
- Analyze a range of grassroots social struggles from anti-capitalist and anti-dictatorship to indigenous rights movements; from ethnic and gender-based liberation movements to refugee resistance.

- Critically consider the notion of "comparison" and develop cross-context analysis of the dynamics that shape local human rights violations and resistances.
- Cultivate skills in critical analysis, communication, self-awareness, and collaborative learning.
- Collaboratively co-construct a learning environment that embodies the praxis of human rights

Course Materials
Required readings will be available at the beginning of the program and upon arrival to each location. All required work is listed in the syllabus. Students are expected to complete the required readings before each class session and to use them in fulfilling assignments.

Assignments and Evaluation

Class participation and contribution to learning environment	**(20%)**
Student Led Discussions	**(15%)**
Reflective Response Writing and Discussion Questions	**(25%)**
Final Reflection Paper	**(40%)**

Class participation and contribution to learning environment (20%)
This is an intensive writing and critical thinking course that will require your full attendance and active participation. We will conduct this course in a seminar format, using class discussions to make sense of the readings and the contexts we are experiencing. As such, your participation in the course will depend on keeping up with the readings and writing assignments, and coming to class sessions prepared to actively contribute to the intellectual growth of the group by thoughtfully engaging the materials and each other, and integrating the information and experiences from field visits, other courses, observations, as well as through daily life in the city. Our aim will be to collaboratively create a reflective and critical learning environment, where everyone's voice is heard and valued.

Class participation for the CIHR course is broadly framed to include not only your participation in class sessions for the course, but also your participation on *all* program related site visits, guest lectures, excursions, debriefs, synthesis sessions – in sum all out of the classroom and in classroom activities of the program. How each of you interacts with the program's guest speakers and site visit hosts is a crucial site for each of you to demonstrate preparedness, critical analysis, and thoughtful engagement with the course and program material. Additionally, the norms for the learning collective we create together at the start of the semester will frame the spirit of how participation will be measured throughout the semester.

Student Led Discussions (15%)
Depending on the number of students in the class, pairs or groups of students will be responsible for preparing a 10-minute presentation to the class on the readings for that week. As you wrap up the presentation, be prepared to ask your classmates questions, which synthesize major themes or point to issues that cut across the literature. NOTE: You can draw upon readings from previous weeks.

Reflective Response Writing and Discussion Questions (25%)
The main writing assignment for this course will consist of an ongoing reflection exercises that tie class readings to other program components. This assignment is designed to offer you an opportunity to reflect on the key issues arising from our course readings and discussions.

For each class session (for sessions 2-10), you are expected to complete a 200-250 word reflection engaging the week's readings. You will select one (or several) substantial quote(s) from the readings and write a response/reflection for this quote. This form of writing invites a close engagement with the text, however the aim is not to summarize or paraphrase the reading, but rather to "make sense" of it by analyzing and responding to it. As mentioned above, this course aims to complement the rest of our

collective study experience (courses, site visits, lectures, home-stays, etc.), as such you may opt to weave these in to your reflections on the readings, thereby using the reading and writing you do for this course as a means for also “making sense” of what you are experiencing and learning throughout the program. You may also opt to draw on your own personal history, identity and past learning experiences. Overall, these pieces should reflect your process of grappling with the themes that emerge from our readings, discussions and experiences. Your writing may convey the confusion and contradictions of your emergent thought processes, natural to the difficulty and complexity of meaningful learning and dialogue. We will find that we are often faced with the need to hold contradictions and tensions in this process.

High quality reflections will reflect the student’s:
- Grasp of the content of the assigned readings;
- Ability to make critical connections with observations, experiences, course themes;
- Inquisitiveness and ability to raise questions; and
- Ability to contribute constructively to class understandings.

You are expected to bring your reflections to each class (printed or hand-written) or send them before class via email; you will share them with your peers and professors as part of our reading and collaborative inquiry.

Final Reflection Paper (40%)
At the end of the semester, you will read through your reflections for each session and write a final reflection paper (1000 words). The final reflection paper will offer a synthesis of your learning process throughout the semester.

Late Work
In keeping with IHP policy, papers handed in late will lose one percentage point per day, unless permission is granted otherwise. Course assignments are due at the beginning of the day.

Evaluation and Grading Criteria
As the learning process of this course is dependent on your continuous and reflective engagement with the course materials, the experiential aspects of our stay in each country, and your learning community (including your peers, faculty and other program staff), grading will serve as an accountability mechanism for these elements. The grading will function on a basis of points. At the end of the term, your cumulative point score will be calculated to determine your final letter grade for the course. It is useful for faculty and students to view final grades in this way. An “A’ represents truly outstanding work, exemplifying rigorous analysis, superior insights, and precise presentation. A “B” signifies highly competent work that completes the assignment very well, with considerable thought, reasonable analytical results and an effective presentation. A “C” represents acceptable, work, satisfying the basic requirements, but lacking distinction, original analytical insights or organization. A “D” grade indicates poorly or partially completed work, reflecting a lack of initiative, inconsistent analytical conclusions and/or a disorganized presentation. Pluses and minuses for the four letter grades indicate better or poorer work. There is no “A+” grade.

Grading Scale

94-100%	A
90-93%	A-
87-89%	B+
84-86%	B
80-83%	B-
77-79%	C+
74-76%	C
70-73%	C-
67-69%	D+
64-66%	D
below 64	F

Expectations and Policies

- Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- Have assignments completed and submitted on schedule and done accordingly to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that faculty's feedbacks to your assignments are provided in a timely manner.
- Ask questions in class. Engage the guest/local lecturers. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- Respect differences of opinion (classmates', lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and the Policies section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as Library resources and research support, Disability Services, Counseling Services, Title IX information, and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion resources.

Course Organization and Required Readings

**Please be aware that topics and site visits may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs*

I. Atlanta & Tennessee

Session 1: Understanding the origins and universality of human rights

Mignolo, W. 2012. "Who speaks for the "human" in human rights? Dispensable and bare lives." Chapter in M. Tlostanova & W. Mignolo, *Learning to Unlearn: Decolonial Reflections from Eurasia and the Americas*. Ohio State University Press, pp. 153-174.

Blunt, Gwilym David. 2017. "Is There a Human Right to Resistance?" *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 4, pp. 860-881.

Session 2: Embodied inequalities

Bourdieu, P. & Wacquant, L. 2004. Symbolic violence. In Scheper-Hughes, N. & Bourgois, *Violence in war and peace: An anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, pp.272-274.

Fanon, F. 1952. Introduction (pp.xi-xviii), Chapter 1 (pp.1-23), and Chapter 5 (pp.89-119. *Black Skin, White Masks*.

Session 3: Indivisibility, intersectionality, and indispensability

Taylor, K. Y. (Ed.). (2017). Introduction & the Combahee River Collective Statement. *How we get free: Black feminism and the Combahee River Collective*. Haymarket Books.

Carillo, J. "And when you leave, take your pictures with you." In Moraga, C. & Anzaldúa, G. (2015) *This Bridge Called My Back: Writing by radical women of color.* Fourth Edition.

Crenshaw, K. (2016). "The Urgency of Intersectionality". Ted Talk: https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality

II. NYC

Session 4: Human rights + coloniality

Prashad, V. (2008). "Paris" in *The darker nations: a people's history of the Third World*. The New Press, pp. 3-15

Maldonado-Torres, N. 2017. On the Coloniality of Human Rights. Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais, 114, pp. 117-136.

Session 5: (Un)Making development

Escobar, A. 1995. *Encountering development: The making and unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton University Press, pp. 3-13; pp. 21-54.

Rostow, W. 1959. "The Stages of Economic Growth." *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol.

12, No. 1. pp. 1-16.

Session 6: The political economy of neoliberal violence

Harvey, David. 2007. “Freedom’s just another word...” In *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 5-38

Standing, G. 2011. *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*, pp. 1-25.

II. Chile

Session 8: Violent and nonviolent resistance

Galtung, Johan. 1969. “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research.” *Journal of Peace Research* Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 167-191

Ginsberg, Benjamin. 2013. “Why Violence Works.” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 12. https://www.chronicle.com/article/Why-Violence-Works/140951

Session 9. Finding justice in memory

Nascimento Araúj M.P & M. Sepúlveda dos Santos. 2009. History, Memory and Forgetting: Political Implications. *RCCS Annual Review*, 1, pp. 77.94

Thompson, J. 2001. Historical Injustice and Reparation: Justifying Claims of Descendants. *Ethics*, 112(1), pp. 114-135.

Session 7: Social movements, indigeneity, and indigenous resistance

Gledhill, John. 1997. “Liberalism, Socio-economic Rights and the Politics of Identity: From Moral Economy to Indigenous Rights.” In R. Wilson ed. *Human Rights, Culture and Context: Anthropological Perspectives*. London: Pluto Press. Pp. 70-110.

Grande, Sandy. 2004. *Red pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought*. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Chapter 3, pp. 63-90.

Session 10: Embracing uncertainty/shaping futures

Bloch, E. 1983. *The principle of hope*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 195-223.

Crapanzano, V. 2003 Reflections on Hope as a Category of Social and Psychological Analysis. *Cultural Anthropology* 18(1), pp.3-32.

