

Comparative Issues in Human Rights

HMRT 3500 (4 Credits / 60 class hours)

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

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

History, as nearly no one seems to know, is not merely something to be read. And it does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us... And it is with great pain and terror that one begins to realize this. ...In great pain and terror because...one enters into battle with that historical creation, Oneself, and attempts to recreate oneself according to a principle more humane and more liberating... (James Baldwin, 1965).

Problem-posing education affirms men and women as beings in the process of becoming—as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality. (Paolo Freire, 1970, 84).

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to collaboratively deconstruct the transnational psychological, social, and material structures that sustain inequality and violence today, and to explore the possibilities for human rights discourse and practice to offer humanizing alternatives. Through this course, students will engage in ongoing comparative analysis of how human rights are exercised, negotiated and contested in the four countries our program visits: USA, Nepal, Jordan and Chile. We will draw on critical, feminist and postcolonial scholarship, to examine processes of social formation and subjectification, and to frame our reflection on resistance and transformation. Throughout the semester, we will deeply explore the notion of praxis, “reflection and action directed at structures to be transformed” (Freire, 1970, 126), which will engage us in analysis of themes of autonomy, ideology, decoloniality, and justice, among others. The course is organized in relation to the overarching themes of the program in each respective context and across them. We will practice pedagogical methods central to problem-posing education, including critical self-reflection, dialogue, collaborative inquiry, analytic writing and futures envisioning.

Course Aims

- Comparatively analyze historical dynamics of power that shape local social hierarchies, forms of oppression and dehumanization.
- Analyze how experiences of capitalism, colonialism, development, and globalization shape local human rights governance and resistance.
- Critically consider the notion of “comparison” and develop cross-context analysis of the dynamics that shape local human rights violations and protections.

- Cultivate skills in critical analysis, reflexivity, 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 launch of the program and upon arrival to each country. All required work is listed in the syllabus and will be discussed in class for further clarification. 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%)

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 your learning and experiences from field visits, guest speakers, other courses, observations, conversations with home-stay families and other people you meet, and daily life in the setting we are in. Our aim will be to collaboratively create a reflective and critical learning environment, where everyone's voice is heard and valued.

Journal Entries (50%)

Personal experiences – revised and in other ways redrawn – become a lens with which to reread and rewrite the cultural stories into which we are born.

- Gloria Anzaldúa, *now let us shift...*

The main writing assignment for this course will consist of an ongoing reflective journal designed to offer you an opportunity to reflect on the key issues arising from our course readings and discussions, and to explore your own personal history and processes of learning and unlearning.

Before each class session (Sessions 2-10), you are expected to complete 400-500 words engaging the week's readings. In these journal entries, I would like to see you respond to the readings directly (for example, you may opt to respond to a specific quote or idea brought up by the authors), while also tying in and reflecting on your own experiences and identity. You are also encouraged to draw on experiences, reflections, or examples from the rest of our collective study abroad experience (site visits, speakers, home-stays, etc.) where relevant. Overall, these entries should reflect your process of grappling with the themes that emerge from readings, discussions and experiences in the program. They should reflect a willingness to turn the lens inward in order to examine how you are situated within the broader context of human rights praxis. You are also invited to submit an optional post-class reflection (100-200 words) as a means of capturing the learning or responses you had to the given class discussion.

The format for these entries is open to your own preferred writing style, as long as it demonstrates your close engagement of the assigned readings. You should not summarize or paraphrase the reading, but rather respond to it and apply it as a tool through which to reread your own positionality and relationship to human rights as you progress throughout the semester. You may find that your writing conveys the confusion and contradictions of your emergent thought processes, natural to the difficulty and complexity of meaningful learning and dialogue. We are often faced with the need to hold contradictions and tensions in this process, these entries are a space to do so.

High quality entries 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 send your entries to me via email by midnight the day before our class meeting. No late entries will be accepted (unless due to health or extraordinary circumstances). The optional post-class reflections should be submitted within 24 hours of the class session. Submission will be carried out via one consecutive email chain with the subject heading "CIHR Journal - [*Your name*]" and each entry should be copied into the body of the email (unless it is in the form of a photograph, in which case you may attach it).

You are also expected to bring your entries to each class (these may be as print outs, hand-written, or on your electronic device), as you may be asked to share them with your peers as part of our reading and collaborative inquiry.

Final Reflection Paper (30%)

At the end of the semester, you will read through your entries and write a final reflection paper (1000 words). The final reflection paper will offer a synthesis of your learning process throughout the semester. You will submit your complete journal along with your final reflection paper to me as one document via email by a specified date.

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Learning in this course is dependent on your continuous and reflective engagement with the course materials, the experiential aspects of our stay in each country, and with your learning community (including your peers, faculty and program staff). As such, grading for the course will serve as an accountability mechanism for these elements by using the above assignments (participation and writing) as a means through which to hold you accountable to them. 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	Excellent
90-93%	A-	
87-89%	B+	
84-86%	B	Above Average
80-83%	B-	
77-79%	C+	
74-76%	C	Average
70-73%	C-	
67-69%	D+	

64-66%	D	Below Average
below 64	F	Fail

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 on schedule, printed, and done accordingly to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer. 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.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Student Handbook for policies on academic integrity, ethics, warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment, and the academic appeals process.

Course Organization and Required Reading

*The assigned readings below are subject to change. In the event of a change, you will be informed in advance via email.

New York City, USA

Session 1 Starting the conversation: Comparative issues in international human rights

- Mignolo, W. (2012). Who Speaks for the “Human” in Human Rights? Dispensable and Bare Lives. Chapter in Tlostanova, M. and Mignolo, W. *Learning to Unlearn: Decolonial Reflections from Eurasia and the Americas*. Ohio State University Press. pp.153-174.
- Young, I. M. (1990). *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 2: The Five Faces of Oppression. pp.39-42 & pp.48-65. & Epilogue. pp.257-260.
- Bonair, R. (2016). Letter. <http://letterstotherevolution.com/roger-bonair-agard#>

Kathmandu, Nepal

Session 2 Development & the making of the Third World.

- Escobar, A. (1995). *Encountering development: The making and unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 1. pp.3-13. & Chapter 2. pp.21-54.
- Hall, S. (1992) The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power. In Hall, S. & Gieben. B. (Eds.). Polity Press. Excerpt pp.201-205.

Supplementary:

- Knutsson, N. (2015). The Intellectual History of Development. In R. Sharpley (ed) *Tourism and Development*. Vol 2: *Tourism and Sustainable Development*, London, SAGE, 2015.
- Poverty Inc. (Documentary)

Session 5 Embodied hierarchies.

- Fanon, F. (1952). *Black Skin, White Masks*. Introduction (pp.xi-xviii), Chapter 1 (pp.1-23), and Chapter 5 (pp.89-119). (Excerpts).
- Mills, C. (2007). White Ignorance. In Sullivan, S. & Tuana, N. *Race and epistemologies of ignorance*. pp.20-36.
- Bourdieu, P. & Wacquant, L. Symbolic violence. In Scheper-Hughes, N. & Bourgois, P. (2004). *Violence in war and peace: An anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. pp.272-274

Supplementary:

- Opatow, S. (1990). Moral exclusion and injustice: An introduction, *Journal of Social Issues*, 46(1), 1–14.

Session 4 Indivisibility, intersectionality, and indispensability

- Crenshaw, K. (2016). “The Urgency of Intersectionality”. Ted Talk: https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality
- Mohanty, C. M. (1986) “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses” in *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, Durham: Duke University Press, pp.333-354
- 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.

Supplementary:

- Langlais, A. (2013). Chapter 1 “Normative and Theoretical Foundations of Human Rights. In Goodhart, M. *Human rights: Politics and practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 1-26.

Session 5 The governance of dignity.

- Weinert, M. S. (2015). *Making human: world order and the global governance of human dignity*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Introduction (pp.1-13); Ch. 2. Human dignity as status in community. (pp. 55-81).
- Revisit Freire, Chapter 1.

Amman, Jordan

Session 8 Securitization.

- Ochs, J. (2011). *Security and Suspicion: An Ethnography of Everyday Life in Israel*. Introduction (p.1-18); Chapter 3: Pahad: Fear as Corporeal Politics (p.64-78), and Epilogue (p.164-166).
- Ginsberg, B. (2013). “Why Violence Works.” Available at: http://chronicle.com/article/Why-ViolenceWorks/140951/?cid=at&utm_source=at&utm_medium=en

Session 6 Borders.

- Zolberg, A.R., Suhrke, A. & Aguayo, S. (1989). *Escape from Violence: Conflict and the Refugee Crisis in the Developing World*, New York: Oxford University Press. Chapter 1, “Who Is a Refugee?”. pp.3-33.
- Gündogdu, A. (2015). *Rightlessness in an age of rights: Hannah Arendt and the contemporary struggles of migrants*. Oxford University Press. Excerpts.

Session 7 Humanitarianism.

- Fassin, D. (2007). Humanitarianism as a politics of life. *Public Culture*. (19) 3: 499-520.
- Mutua, M. (TBD)

Santiago, Chile

Session 9 The age of the market.

- Harvey, D. (2007) *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. “Chapter 1 Freedom’s just another word...”. pp.5-38
- Harney, S. & Moten, F. (2013). *The Undercommons: Fugitive planning and black study*. Ch 4. Debt and Study. pp.58-69
- Calle 13. (2011). “Latinoamérica”.

Session 10 Methodologies of resistance.

- Sandoval, C. (2000). *Methodology of the Oppressed*. Excerpts.
- Fanon, F. (1952). *Black Skin, White Masks*. Chapter 8. pp.174-181

Session 11 By way of conclusion...

- TBD