

Kenyon College
Department of History
History 322: Human Rights in Latin America
Spring 2009 – Monday, 7:00-10:00 p.m.
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Office Hours: MWF, 11-12
Th, 3-5
And by appointment

Description

This seminar aims to introduce the student to the subject of human rights in Latin America. Human rights discourse in Latin America has been developing significantly since the 1970s, and now consists of many different and sometimes overlapping ideas and practices, which are becoming difficult to synthesize or to conceive as one subject. The subject, furthermore, can be approached from the perspective of different academic disciplines, including those of law, political science, anthropology and history, to name a few (it is also, of course, relevant to social and political activists). This seminar identifies a few of the legal and political principles underlying human rights, and considers the subject from a historical perspective. The seminar will not attempt to address human rights exhaustively; rather, we shall pose questions about the development of human rights discourse in Latin America, while identifying a few of the main issues with which this growing field has been concerned. Students themselves in their writing projects may explore in a focused manner specific aspects or subtopics within the larger field.

The required reading in this course is relatively moderate for a seminar (averaging 150 pages per week), so as to ensure that students can pursue their writing projects while engaging meaningfully in seminar discussions. (Some of the texts, moreover, demand close analysis, and may necessitate more time to read.) Assigned weekly readings will be supplemented by the analysis of primary documents during seminar meetings, as well as the viewing of some visual materials. Because the course is a seminar, active participation in class discussions is essential. This requirement implies conscientious attendance and the timely completion of all reading, written and oral assignments. Seminar discussions will serve as a basis and grounding for individual projects, and should help to guide students as they proceed with their individual research projects (students will be expected to share regularly with other seminar participants progress on their projects). In addition, students will be encouraged to meet individually with the instructor in order to undertake their papers in an informed manner.

Requirements

This seminar has two main requirements: informed contributions to the seminar discussions, and the timely completion of two ten-page papers. These requirements are somewhat related. Required, student oral presentations basically will be progress reports

of the student's written projects, and less formal updates of the projects will comprise part of the participation grade.

The papers are due on February 26 and May 1 by 5 p.m. in Seitz 2, respectively. They should be based in part on primary sources, and (as said) number at least 10 pages in length, double-spaced (not including their bibliographies). Citation style both for the papers and their bibliographies should adhere to Kate Turabian's, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations*. Early in the semester students should identify topics they would like to learn more about, and begin to research them. A short (1-2 page, double-spaced) proposal for each paper, which includes a provisional thesis statement with several cited sources, is due on January 30 at 5 p.m. and March 27 at 5 p.m., respectively (see also the schedule of meetings below). Citation style in these short papers should also conform to Turabian. The final grades for the major papers will reflect, in part, the effort that the student has made researching and thinking as well as writing about a difficult but surely interesting issue.

Regarding students' oral presentations, students presenting their in-progress projects will be expected to e-mail to the seminar in advance a list of the issues they will be discussing, and provide all seminar participants an outline of their project on the day of their presentation. Those not presenting will be expected to respond meaningfully (and constructively) to the oral reports at the time of the presentation.

To reiterate, students will need to participate fully and thoughtfully in the seminar discussions. Attendance is mandatory, and a student should consult with the instructor if he or she needs to be excused from a session; any unexcused absence will affect the student's participation grade severely. Any student with a disability requiring a special accommodation should contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester, as well as the appropriate college officer (Erin Salva, salvae@kenyon.edu), so that accommodations can be made.

Grading

Seminar Participation	25%
Oral Presentations	15%
Two Paper Proposals	10%
Two Ten-Page Papers	50%
Total	100%

Grading will follow the formula below:

97-100%	A+	87-89%	B+	77-79%	C+	65-69%	D
93-96%	A	83-86%	B	73-76%	C	< 65%	F
90-92%	A-	80-82%	B-	70-72%	C-		

Although grades will not be apportioned pursuant to a curve, grading will be meaningful: e.g., in order to achieve an 85 or 90, you will need to submit good or excellent work.

Late papers will be subject to a penalty. If a student needs an extension, for a valid reason, the student must request it no later than one week in advance of the due date of the paper; granting such an extension is at the discretion of the instructor. Plagiarism will be sanctioned in accord with the applicable college policy.

Books

The following books are required, and have been ordered through the bookstore:

1. Bartolomé de las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (Penguin Books, 1992).
2. Thomas C. Wright, *State Terrorism* (Rowman Littlefield, 2006).
3. Steve Stern, *Shining and Other Paths* (Duke University Press, 1998).
4. Archdiocese of Sao Paulo, *Torture in Brazil* (Univ. of Texas Press, 1998).
5. Maria Teresa Tula, *Hear My Testimony* (South End Press, 1994).
6. Robin Kirk, *More Terrible than Death* (Perseus Group, 2006).

In addition, a number of other readings listed below have been placed on reserve at the library, including on e-reserve. Such readings will be identified throughout the semester.

Weekly Themes and Reading Assignments

Week 1, Monday, January 12 – Introduction: Principal Themes of the Course

Reading Assignment: There is no reading assignment for this week. We shall review the syllabus carefully and consider the main interests of seminar participants, as well as the principal themes of the course.

Week 2, Monday, January 19 – The Conquest of the Americas and Its Critics

Reading Assignment: Bartolomé de las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*. Proposals for the first major paper are due on January 23 at Seitz 2 at 5 p.m.

Week 3, Monday, January 26 – The Emergence of Modern Human Rights Law

Reading Assignment: R.C. van Caenegem, *An Historical Introduction to Private Law* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), Chapter 4 (excerpts); Lynn Hunt, “The Paradoxical Origins of Human Rights,” in *Human Rights and Revolutions*, edited by Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, Lynn Hunt and Marilyn B. Young (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000); Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen; Universal Declaration of Human Rights; American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man; and the American Convention on Human Rights. The latter documents are available at several web sites, including: www.hrcr.org/docs/index.html.

Week 4, Monday, February 2 – Human Rights Law and Practice

Reading Assignment: Henry Steiner and Philip Alston, *International Human Rights in Context* (Oxford University Press, 1996)(selections); Ellen L. Lutz, Kathryn Sikkink, “International Human Rights Law and Practice in Latin America,” *International Organizations*, vol. 54, no. 3 (Summer, 2000): 633-59.

Week 5, Monday, February 9 – Human Rights Law and Its (Progressive) Critics

Reading Assignment: David Forsythe, “Human Rights, the U.S. and the Organization of the American States,” *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 1 (February 1991): 66-98; David Kennedy, “The International Human Rights Movement: Part of the Problem?” in the *European Human Rights Law Review*, no. 3 (2001), republished in 15 *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, 101 (2002).

Week 6, Monday, February 16 – Student Presentations

Reading Assignment: Student outlines and questions.

Week 7, Monday, February 23 – The Pinochet Case

Reading Assignment: There is no reading assignment this week; the first major paper is due on Thursday, *February 26*, at 5 p.m. in Seitz 2.

[Spring Break]

Week 8, Monday, March 16 – Human Rights in Brazil

Reading Assignment: Elaine Scarry, *The Body of Pain* (Oxford University Press, 1985) (selections)(on reserve); Archdiocese of Sao Paulo, *Torture in Brazil*, selections.

Week 9, Monday, March 23 – Southern Cone Authoritarian Regimes and Human Rights

Reading Assignment: Thomas C. Wright, *State Terrorism: Chile, Argentina and International Human Rights*, Chapters 1-3. Additional sources will be reviewed in class. Proposals for the second major paper are due on March 27 at Seitz 2 at 5 p.m.

Week 10, Monday, March 30 – Southern Cone Authoritarian Regimes and Human Rights (Continued)

Reading Assignment: Wright, *State Terrorism*, Chapters 4 to 6. Additional sources will be reviewed in class.

Week 11, Monday, April 6 – Human Rights in Central America

Reading Assignment: Tula, *Hear My Testimony*

Recommended: *Memory of Silence: Report of the Commission for Historical Clarification, Conclusions and Recommendations:*

<http://shr.aaas.org/guatemala/ceh/report/english/toc.html>;

From Madness to Hope: the 12 Year War in El Salvador: Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador (selections):

http://www.usip.org/library/tc/doc/reports/el_salvador/tc_es_03151993_toc.html

Week 12, Monday, April 13 – Human Rights in Peru

Reading Assignment: Stern, *Shining and Other Paths*, selections; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Final Report and General Conclusions:*

<http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ingles/ifinal/conclusiones.php>

Week 13, Monday, April 20 – Human Rights in Colombia

Reading Assignment: Kirk, *More Terrible than Death*, selections.

Week 14, Monday, April 27 – Conclusions and Student Presentations

Reading Assignment: Student outlines and questions. *Second major paper is due on May 1 at 5 p.m. in Seitz 2.*