

San José State University
Department of Justice Studies
Spring 2017
JS 25, Introduction to Human Rights and Justice, Section3

Course and Contact Information

Instructor:	Roni Abusaad, Ph.D.
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Email:	roni.abusaad@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	Immediately following class
Class Days/Time:	Fridays, 1:30 - 4:15 p.m.
Classroom:	MH 520 (MacQuarrie Hall)
GE Category:	D3 Social Issues

Course Description

From Catalog: “This course is a lower division introduction to the history of human rights as a concept and body of international law, and to the complicated role of human rights in contemporary social justice campaigns.”

This course explores the following:

- The origin of human rights (as an idea and body of law)
- The definition of human rights in international law (i.e. through human rights instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)?
- Functions of the major international courts (ICC and ICJ)
- Significant human rights related international NGOs and their workings
- The relationship between international human rights and human rights struggles and social problems in the U.S. and local communities

GE Learning Outcomes (GELO)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- (GELO1) Place contemporary developments in cultural, historical, environmental, and spatial contexts.
- (GELO2) Identify the dynamics of ethnic, cultural, gender/sexual, age-based, class, regional, national, transnational, and global identities and the similarities, differences, linkages, and interactions between them.
- (GELO3) Evaluate social science information, draw on different points of view, and formulate applications appropriate to contemporary social issues.
- (GELO4) Students will be able to apply multidisciplinary material to a topic relevant to policy and social action at

the local, national, and/or international levels.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

The goals of this course are to (1) give students a basic understanding of the events, actors and ideas that gave rise to the concept of human rights; (2) give students a basic understanding of international human rights law and a general familiarity with common human rights instruments; (3) give students the opportunity to grapple with the complicated relationship in theory and practice between human rights and social justice. As part of this last goal, students will become relatively familiar with several contemporary human rights campaigns.

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- (CLO1) Recall a general history of human rights including the significant events, actors, and ideas that gave rise to the concept of human rights.
- (CLO2) Demonstrate a general familiarity with major human rights instruments and how these instruments work with regard to international (treaty) law.
- (CLO3) Demonstrate a familiarity with several current human rights campaigns (domestic and international), reporting agencies (Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, etc.), and policy debates.

Required Texts/Readings

Textbook

All readings and materials will be provided by the instructor as emailed PDF files. Should you have any problems obtaining reading materials throughout the course, please email the instructor for assistance.

Other Readings

All readings will be distributed by the instructor as emailed PDF files.

Library Liaison

For help with library resources and library research (including the use of databases and online research materials—such as journal search engines), students are strongly encouraged to contact the Justice Studies Library Liaison: Silke Higgins, silke.higgins@sjsu.edu, (408)808-2118.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Readings

Students are expected to complete readings before class session indicated on the course schedule. Students should come to class prepared to *discuss* the assigned readings and be ready to share their learning with the class. There will also be reading assigned in class.

Classroom Activities and Discussion:

This course requires a great deal of classroom discussion and classroom activity. This is primarily because much of the course material is often new and challenging for lower division, undergraduate students. These discussions and classroom activities are designed to help students successfully achieve all learning objectives (GELO 1-4; CLO 1-3), and to prepare students for graded assignments and exams.

The Current Events Quiz and Presentation:

Description and Purpose: The interdisciplinary study of human rights requires a working knowledge of significant events (news) at the national and international level, particularly regarding significant social problems, policy shifts/debates, issues of war and peace, trends of social and/or cultural change, international relations, and so forth. Each session of this course will begin with a rundown of the day's major news headlines (as they relate to human rights and international security), and brief discussion of the most provocative stories.

Periodically, students will be expected to complete a quiz on the ongoing news stories of interest to the course. The Current Events Quiz will test student's awareness of relevant events of central concern to the course (as will be evident from course discussion), and "critical news literacy"—or the ability to critically interpret information from specific sources, keeping in mind the interests and constraints of the source (GELO 1, 3, 4; CLO 1, 3).

Grading: Quizzes will be graded on a 10-point scale. They will be evaluated on content (accuracy), clarity, and critical news literacy (critical reflection on news sources). Completion of these assignments is also meant to help students come up with topics for the larger "Human Rights Report-Back" assignments described below. Current Events presentations and quizzes will be worth **20%** of the final course grade.

"Human Rights Report-Back" Assignment:

Description and Purpose: Students will have the opportunity to research and discuss a contemporary human rights struggle or campaign of their choosing. This assignment requires students to write a minimum of 6 pages, employing at least 3 scholarly sources, in standard APA format: (1) describe the current human rights campaign or struggle (GELO 3; GELO 1), providing an historical social context (GELO 1, 2; CLO 1); (2) discuss the explicit application of human rights law and/or discourse (GELO 4; CLO 2); (3) provide a brief analysis of the campaign's aims, strategies, and progress (GELO 4, CLO 3). Paper topics must be cleared by the course instructor before drafting (see course schedule). On the day these assignments are due, students will discuss and share them in small groups (thus, "report-back"). HR report-backs are designed to expose students to how human rights law and discourse may be employed in the messy struggle for social justice. These assignments are also designed to further students' understanding of and familiarity with human rights instruments and reporting bodies/agencies.

Grading: These assignments will be graded on a 10-point scale. They will be evaluated on content, clarity, thoroughness, and quality of sources. A sample grading rubric will be distributed to students to make all graded expectations clear before assignment submissions. Students will complete a draft process and all final assignments will be returned with written qualitative feedback from the instructor in order to improve writing and research skills. HR report-backs will be worth **20%** of the final course grade.

Final Examination or Evaluation

Mid Term and Final Exams

There will be a midterm and final exam in this course to cover all course material and topics discussed and assigned in class. Both exams will be relatively straight forward, in a multiple-choice format, with both retention and application

questions designed to evaluate students' substantive grasp of course material. Each of these exams will be worth **30%** of the final course grade (GELO 1-4; CLO 1-3).

Grading Information

Grades will be calculated from a weighted point system. There are no “curves” applied to grades in this course.

Students may complete **extra credit** in this course. In addition to attending select events (will be announced by the instructor), extra credit assignments will be available to all students who are interested.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Percentage of Final Grade</u>
Current Events Quizzes and presentations	20%
HR Report Back	20%
Mid-Term Exam	30%
Final Exam (not cumulative)	30%
TOTAL	100%

Grading Scale

Exams and final grades will be calculated as a percentage on a typical “10 point scale”:

98-100%	A+
94-97	A
90-93	A-
88-89	B+
84-87	B
80-83	B-
78-79	C+
74-77	C
70-73	C-
68-69	D+
64-67	D
60-63	D-
<60	F

Classroom Protocol

1. This course depends on participation and interaction. Students are expected to be on time to class out of respect for your colleagues and instructor.
2. All classroom participants are expected to foster an environment that encourages participation, rather than silencing others (be respectful to one another, do not insult or intimidate others, and so forth).
3. Students are expected to complete all readings and assignments by the dates indicated on the syllabus.
4. Students are responsible for any and all notes and materials missed in their absence.
5. Cell phone, PDA, and Laptop/Internet use will not be tolerated during class time unless they are part of class activities or necessary to field an emergency.

JUSTICE STUDIES READING AND WRITING PHILOSOPHY

The Department of Justice Studies is committed to scholarly excellence. Therefore, the Department promotes academic, critical, and creative engagement with language (i.e., reading and writing) throughout its curriculum. A sustained and intensive exploration of language prepares students to think critically and to act meaningfully in interrelated areas of their

lives—personal, professional, economic, social, political, ethical, and cultural. Graduates of the Department of Justice Studies leave San José State University prepared to enter a range of careers and for advanced study in a variety of fields; they are prepared to more effectively identify and ameliorate injustice in their personal, professional and civic lives. Indeed, the impact of literacy is evident not only within the span of a specific course, semester, or academic program but also over the span of a lifetime.

University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs’ [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>”

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The schedule is subject to change with fair notice. Students will be notified of changes to the schedule or assigned readings via email. You can always find the most up-to-date syllabus on Canvas.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	1/27	Introduction to the Course and Overview of Human Rights Watch: “What are the universal human rights?”
2	2/3	The US and Human Rights Read: Goodhart - The Universalism of Human Rights, pg. 19-24 and Chap 11 of Human Rights in our Own Backyard (HRIIOB)
3	2/10	Foundations and Origins of Human Rights Student Presentations HR Learning Module 1 Read: Reichert Chap 2
4	2/17	Human Rights in International Law Read: Goodhart Chap 2 and Reichert Chap 3
5	2/24	Looking at “The Covenants”: the ICCPR and ICESCR Read: Reichert Chap 4 HR Report Back assignment topics due! Midterm Exam Review
6	3/3	Midterm Exam
7	3/10	American Exceptionalism Read: Thomas “Forward” and Frezzo Ch. 2
8	3/17	Civil and Political Rights and the U.S. Constitution Read: Excerpt from Zinn’s People’s History of the US and Building U.S. Human Rights Culture from the Ground Up - P-229-253 of HRIIOBY
9	3/24	Economic Rights and How Movements Work to Secure Them Exploration of the Farmworkers Movement

		Read: Esparza Chap 3 and FDR's Economic Bill of Rights
10	4/7	Wealth Inequality Read: Forms of resistance
11	4/14	Cultural rights
12	4/21	The International Convention to End all forms of Racial Discrimination [ICERD] Writing Workshop— <i>HR Report Back 1st Drafts Due in Class</i> Read: Ella Baker on Social change and organizing
13	4/28	Environmental Rights
14	5/5	<i>BRING A PRINTED COPY OF FINAL HR Report Back</i>
15	5/12	Final Exam review
16	5/22	Final Exam - Monday, May 22, 12:15 - 2:30 p.m.