

Anth 150  
**Human Rights and Ethics**

Spring 2010

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**Course description:** This course is an anthropological consideration of human rights and ethical action. We will not take the meaning of these terms for granted, but rather will investigate how human rights come to be defined, how human rights intersect with other ways of thinking about both rights and human beings, and how tensions between universalism and cultural specificity play out in this arena. We will also examine the ethical challenges of anthropological practice and anthropological considerations of human rights. Turning this critical eye on anthropology itself will enable us to understand more sharply how knowledge is formed and what its ethical and political stakes are.

**Course pre-requisite:** This is an upper-level course and requires a familiarity with anthropology. Students should have already taken Intro to Sociocultural Anthropology (Anth 2) or an equivalent course. You should be prepared to keep up with the significant reading load.

**Course Expectations:** The success of the course – and your individual success in the class – requires regular attendance, participation, and preparation. Students are expected to come to class having done the assigned readings for the day and to be prepared to actively engage in discussion about those readings and their connection to broader themes in the class. Discussion will form a crucial part of the class, and be a central space for your learning. You should bring your copy of the day's reading to each class.

**Required texts:**

*The following books are available for purchase at the GWU bookstore and are on reserve at Gelman library:*

Didier Fassin, *When Bodies Remember: Experiences and Politics of AIDS in South Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

Susan Slyomovics, *The Performance of Human Rights in Morocco* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

Additional required readings are available through electronic reserves on blackboard.

**Learning Goals:**

- To recognize and identify key topics and questions in the anthropology of human rights.
- To analyze and evaluate anthropological scholarship on human rights and ethics.
- To identify, analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and employ forms of supporting evidence appropriate and relevant to scholarly work in anthropology.
- To apply critical analytic and evaluative thinking to your own writing, through drafting, revising, and editing.

**Course Requirements:**

*Attendance and Participation:* This course is organized as a seminar, which means that in order for it to be successful, we all need to come to class having done the readings and prepared to discuss them. Preparation for discussion includes identifying puzzling aspects of the text, highlighting passages for analysis, and raising questions for debate. Everybody should plan on joining in our discussions. I recognize that people have different styles of participation and different levels of comfort with speaking in class. The portion of your grade based on class participation will reflect not how many times you speak in class, but how you share in developing a lively and respectful conversation. Sometimes holding back a comment for a more appropriate moment can be as important as speaking. Class attendance is required; more than three absences will result in the lowering of your participation grade.

*Discussion leading:* In the second half of the course, each class will be led by a group of students who will be responsible for introducing the readings and leading discussion. Details will be discussed in class.

*Postings:* Over the course of the semester, everyone is required to post – through Blackboard – **8** 1 paragraph reflections on the readings. These reflections should be posted by 11:30pm on the night before our Tuesday meeting. I will print out the postings then and anything submitted after this time will not count toward your total. Everyone should read through the postings before coming to class. You can choose which days to submit the response, but **5** should be completed before spring break, and **3** after. Postings cannot be submitted after the fact. These are not formal papers, but rather are an opportunity for you to react to and reflect on the readings for the week. Raise questions the readings posed for you, think about how they relate to other things we have read, consider how they fit into the course as a whole. What I will be looking for in these postings is evidence that you are actively engaging with the course materials; I will also be looking for evidence that you are thinking about each other's responses. These postings will help jumpstart our discussions of the readings, so you should be prepared to talk about your posting in class.

*Papers:* There will be three papers required for this class. Each of these assignments will be discussed further in class.

Paper 1: This paper will be a 4-5 page essay, written in response to questions distributed in class. This paper will go through a round of revisions. You must turn in your original draft with your revisions.

Paper 2: This 4-5 page paper will be based on one of your reading responses, allowing you to develop one or two ideas that you have already identified as particularly interesting, troubling or compelling. This paper will go through a round of revisions. You must turn in your original draft with your revisions.

Paper 3: In your final paper, 10-12 pages, you will research a human rights topic of your choice. This paper will be developed through stages. You will turn in your choice of topic and preliminary bibliography on March 23 and we will workshop these ideas. You will submit a 1-page report on your research progress and any difficulties you have encountered on April 13 and we will workshop these reports. The final paper is due April 26.

Assignments should be turned in at the beginning of class the day they are due. Electronic papers will not be accepted. Late papers will be docked one-third of a grade for each day they are late and will not be accepted after one week.

All work must be completed in accordance with The George Washington University Code of Academic Integrity. For writing assignments this means, among other things that: 1) quotes be clearly identified with quotation marks and fully cited, 2) the source of ideas not your own be properly cited, and 3) the paper represents your own work and writing. For further details about the university's academic integrity policy, see: <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>.

You are responsible for the assignments and deadlines that are detailed in this syllabus as well as for any changes that may be announced in class or via blackboard.

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately at the beginning of the semester to discuss specific needs. Please contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/>.

A note on communicating with the professor: Email is a great method of communication for a simple question or to set up a meeting. It is not, however, a good way to get advising – help on a paper, further discussion of readings and lectures. For the latter you should always come and see me during office hours or by appointment. I will not do advising on email. You should also be aware that I am not on email at all times. I will respond to any email as quickly as I can, but it may take a day or two (especially over weekends).

**Grading:**

Participation and attendance:	17%
*includes discussion leading, in-class work, and joining in discussion*	
Postings:	8%
Paper #1:	20%
Paper #2:	20%
Research Paper:	35%

## **Class Schedule**

### **January 12 and 14 - Thinking about Human Rights and Ethics**

In Focus: Anthropology and Human Rights, selection of brief commentaries in *Anthropology News* April 2006.

Montgomery McFate and Andrea Jackson "An Organizational Solution for DOD's Cultural Knowledge Needs," *Military Review* July-August (2005): 18-21.

David Vine "Enabling the Kill Chain," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 30 2007

### **January 19 and 21 - Human Rights histories**

Mark Mazower, "The Strange Triumph of Human Rights, 1933-1950," *The Historical Journal* 47, 2 (2004): 379-398.

Thomas Laqueur, "Bodies, Details, and the Humanitarian Narrative," in *The New Cultural History*, ed. Lynn Hunt, 176-204 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

The Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen (1789)

### **January 26 and 28 – Anthropological Ethics and Human Rights**

Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropology" *Current Anthropology* 36, 3 (1995):409-440

Phillipe Bourgois, "Confronting Anthropological Ethics: Ethnographic Lessons from Central America," *Journal of Peace Research*, 27, 1 (1990): 43-54

Mark Goodale, "Ethical Theory as Social Practice," *American Anthropologist* 108, 1 (2006): 25-37.

### **February 2 and 4 – Cultural rights and human rights**

Bruce Robbins and Elsa Stamatopoulou, "Reflections on Culture and Cultural Rights" in *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, 2/3 (2004):419-434.

Lata Mani "Contentious Traditions: the Debate on Sati in Colonial India," in *Recasting women: Essays in Indian colonial history*, eds. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, 88-126 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990).

Veena Das, "Communities as Political Actors: The Question of Cultural Rights," in *Critical Events: An Anthropological Perspective on Contemporary India*. V. Das (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

Universal Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

### **February 9 and 11 – Human Rights Law and Universal Claims**

Ruti Teitel, "For Humanity," *Journal of Human Rights* 3, 2 (2004): 225-237

John Cochrane, "Islam and International Humanitarian Law: From a Clash to a Conversation Between Civilizations," *IRRC*, 84, 847 (2002): 597-626.

Arzoo Osanloo, "Human Rights: The Politics and Prose of Discursive Sites," from *The Politics of Women's Rights in Iran*, 166-199 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009)

Islamic Declaration of HR

### **February 11: Draft of Paper #1 Due**

### **February 16 and 18 - Human Rights Reporting and Activism**

Richard Wilson, "Representing Human Rights Violations: Social Contexts and Subjectivities," in *Human Rights, Culture and Context: Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Richard Wilson, 134-60 (London: Pluto Press, 1997).

Shannon Speed, "At the Crossroads of Human Rights and Anthropology: Toward a Critically Engaged Activist Research," *American Anthropologist* 108, 1 (2006): 66-76.

Laurie King-Irani, "Advocacy, Accountability, and Academia: Is Human Rights Activism within the Jurisdiction of Anthropology?," in John Borneman, ed. *The Case of Ariel Sharon and the Fate of Universal Jurisdiction* (Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies Monograph Series, 2004).

February 18 – Guest Lecture: Laurie King

### **February 16: Drafts of Paper #1 back**

### **February 18: Revised Paper #1 Due**

### **February 23 and 25 - Humanitarianism and Human Rights: Protection and Relief**

David Forsythe, "Contemporary Humanitarianism: The Global and the Local," in Richard Wilson and Richard Brown, *Humanitarianism and Suffering: the Mobilization of Empathy*, 58-87 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

Didier Fassin and Estelle D'Halluin, "The Truth from the Body: Medical Certificates as Ultimate Evidence for Asylum Seekers," *American Anthropologist*. Dec 2005, Vol. 107, No. 4: 597-608.

Ilana Feldman, "The Quaker Way: Ethical Labor and Humanitarian Relief" *American Ethnologist* 34, 4 (2007): 689-705.

### **March 2 and 4 - Gender and Human Rights**

Bettina Shell-Duncan, "From Health to Human Rights: Female Genital Cutting and the Politics of Intervention" *American Anthropologist* 110, 2 (2008): 225-236

Alice Miller, "Sexuality, Violence against Women and Human Rights: Women Make Demands and Ladies Get Protection," *Health and Human Rights* 7, 2 (2004).

March 2: In-class film: Divorce Iranian Style

### **March 4: Drafts of Paper #2 Due**

### **March 9 and 11 – Torture and Human Rights**

Lisa Hajjar, Torture and the Future. Middle East Report Online, 2004

Marnia Lazreg, "Doing Torture," In *Torture and the Twilight of Empire: From Algiers to Baghdad* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

March 9: In-class film: Ghosts of Abu Ghraib

### **March 9: Drafts of Paper #2 back**

### **March 11: Revised Paper #2 Due**

**March 15-20 - Spring Break**

**March 23 and 25 – Health and Human Rights**

Didier Fassin, *When Bodies Remember: Experiences and Politics of AIDS in South Africa*

**March 23: Topic and preliminary bibliography for research paper due  
Research paper workshop #1**

**March 30 and April 1 – Health and Human Rights**

Didier Fassin, *When Bodies Remember: Experiences and Politics of AIDS in South Africa*

**April 6 and 8 – Performance of Human Rights**

Susan Slyomovics, *The Performance of Human Rights in Morocco*

**April 8: No class**

**April 13 and 15 – Performance of Human Rights**

Susan Slyomovics, *The Performance of Human Rights in Morocco*

**April 13: 1-page Report on research progress due  
Research paper workshop #2**

**April 20 and 22 – Media and Human Rights**

Tom Keenan, “Mobilizing Shame” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103(2-3): 435-449

Ronit Avni, “Mobilizing Hope: Beyond the Shame-Based Model in the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict” *American Anthropologist* 108, 1 (2006): 205 - 214.

Rony Brauman, “Global Media and the Myths of Humanitarian Relief: The Case of the 2004 Tsunami,” in Richard Wilson and Richard Brown, *Humanitarianism and Suffering: the Mobilization of Empathy*, 108-17 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

**April 26: Final Paper Due, by 4 pm**