Course Description and Philosophy

The objective of this course is to introduce students to the bases of human rights from a number of distinct disciplinary and theoretical perspectives. Human rights have a long and rich history in philosophy, law, and critical and social theory. They are also subject to constant controversy between those who feel people have too many rights, those who feel we have too few, and those who feel it is nonsensical to even talk about rights at all. Even if one could come up with a consistent account of rights everyone could agree on, we’d face the dilemma of what justified them. Is it culture? A convincing morality? Religion? The law? By the end of the course students will have a broader and deeper understanding of these theoretical controversies, and should also have begun to make up their own mind about the virtues and defects of rights discourse. By its conclusion students will be able to:

- Critically evaluate different theoretical approaches to rights
- Apply them to practical problems in the modern world
- Reflect on their own preferences and normative convictions in relation to rights
- Successfully produce high quality written work on these topics

This course is interdisciplinary and dialogical. While everyone—including myself!—has their own convictions on these topics we should be open minded about changing our perspective where warranted. It is also expected that students will be highly involved in raising questions and points of interest to propel the classes’ conversation forward.

Course Schedule

This class will be held on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 10:00-10:50 AM for the 2020 FA semester. Due to the unprecedented nature of the COVID 19 crisis we will be increasingly flexible with regard to meeting in person, using a variety of different media as necessary. None the less we will endeavor to maintain as much regularity as possible given the circumstances.
Email and Meeting Policy

Due to the unprecedented nature of the COVID Crisis we are going to endeavor to keep face to face contact to a minimum while still maintaining rigorous academic standards and availability. Consequently you may email me anytime at mattmcmmanus300@gmail.com or mcmannusm@whitman.edu. I will endeavor to respond to all queries within 24 hours. In the event that you do not receive a response please feel free to resend a message. I will also be available for consultations via Zoom or Skype during a time period we will schedule.

Disability Policy

If you have disability and will require accommodations in this course, please email or call Antonia Keithahn, Assistant Director of Academic Resources: Disability Support (Memorial 326, 509.527.5767, keithaam@whitman.edu) for assistance in developing a plan to address your specific needs. All information about disabilities is private; if I receive notification from Ms. Keithahn that you are eligible to receive accommodations they will be provided in a discrete manner.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Participation</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Essay</td>
<td>Wednesday, November 18th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay Outline</td>
<td>Wednesday, October 14th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>November 11th-18th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exams</td>
<td>Wednesday, September 16th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Final week of November</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assignments

Classroom Participation: This class is intended to be dialogical, in the sense that we will all be discussing the nature of human rights to try and assess the strengths and weaknesses of different theoretical perspectives. Consequently students will be expected to attend class regularly and contribute their informed opinions. Overall participation will be assessed at the end of the semester. Students will be evaluated based on both the quantity and quality of their contributions. Saying something insightful and well thought out is worth more than simply saying a great deal to fill time.

Essay Outline and Final Essay: Students will prepare a short 2-3 page essay outline discussing a topic in human rights theory they intend to write on. The subject will be at the discretion of the student so long as it is related to course material. The outline will highlight the main arguments
being presented in the paper, while including an early bibliography with 8 academic sources that will be referenced in the final essay. The essay outline will be submitted on Wednesday, October 14th and returned with feedback. The Final Essay will be submitted on Wednesday, November the 18th and will be between 10-12 pages long. It will include a title page and bibliography, and should fulfill the promise of the outline while addressing earlier criticisms. Students are permitted to change their topic between writing the Essay Outline and the Final Essay so long as they consult the Professor first. The Final Essay will be graded based on meeting the assignment requirements, the overall quality of the arguments, and the level of polish applied.

Presentations: At the conclusion of the semester each student will present a 10-15 minute long analysis of a chosen human rights theory. Presentations can either be analytical or argumentative: they can analyze a given case study through one of the theoretical lenses we studied earlier in the class, or present an argument for or against one of these lenses. Students may use digital media to augment their presentation if they wish. They will be graded on meeting the assignment requirements, the overall quality of the presentation, and the level of engagement generated from the audience. In the event that social distancing requires us to avoid close contact, presentations will be conducted online.

Exams: The two exams will take place on Wednesday, September 16th and the final one during the assigned exam period. Both exams will consist of multiple choice questions, several short answer questions, and a long answer question. Students will be evaluated on their understanding of the course material and the capacity to apply it in a rigorous and creative manner.

Assignment Submission and Late Penalties: Assignments are to be handed in at the beginning of class the week they are due. Late assignments may be submitted in the Course Director's drop box in the Maxey building. They will be penalized per day for lateness. Exceptions to the lateness penalty require submitting a Doctor’s note or other relevant evidence that the assignment could not reasonably be completed on time. Assessing this will be subject to Professor’s discretion but might involve: unexpected tragedies, important personal events, and, in very rare cases, work related disruptions.

**Course Readings by Week**

We will be reading three primary texts for this course: Seyla Benhabib’s *The Rights of Others*, Costas Douzinas’ *The End of Human Rights*, and Jessica Whyte’s *The Morals of the Market*. In addition there will be a wide array of supplementary readings assigned. Students are expected to come to the class having done the readings and prepared to discuss them at some length. With the exception of the primary texts which are available in the bookstore all materials will be linked online.
Week One: Introduction (August 24th-28th)

Read Chapter One of Jack Donnelly’s *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice*
Read the Introduction of Seyla Benhabib’s *The Rights of Others*

Week Two: Human Rights From Different Cultural Perspectives (August 31st-September 4th)

Read Amartya Sen’s “Human Rights and Asian Values.”
Read Jack Donnelly’s “Cultural Relativism and Universal Values.”

Week Three: What Are Rights? (September 7th-11th)

Read Lynn Hunt Interview “How Our Evolving Understanding of Individual Autonomy Led to Human Rights for All.”
Read Chapter One to Three of Seyla Benhabib’s *The Rights of Others*

Week Four: The Right to Have Rights? (September 14th-18th)

Read Chapter Nine of Hannah Arendt’s *The Origins of Totalitarianism*
Read Chapter Four-Conclusion of Seyla Benhabib’s *The Rights of Others*

Week Five: Liberalism and Liberal Rights I (September 21st-25th)

Read Thomas Hobbes’ *Leviathan* Chapter Fourteen and Fifteen
Read John Locke’s *Second Treatise on Government* Chapters Eight-Eleven
Read the Introduction of Jessica Whyte’s *The Morals of the Market*

Week Six: Liberalism and Liberal Rights II (September 28th-October 2nd)

Text of the Declaration of Independence
Text of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen
Read Jeremy Bentham’s “Anarchial Fallacies.”
Read Chapter Two of Jessica Whyte *The Morals of the Market*

Week Seven: Liberalism and Liberal Rights III (October 5th- 9th)

Read Immanuel Kant *Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals*
Read Immanuel Kant “On Perpetual Peace”
Read Chapter Three of Jessica Whyte’s *The Morals of the Market*
Week Eight: Liberalism and Liberal Rights IV (October 12th-16th)
Text of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
Read Milton Friedman “Private Property.”
Read Chapter Four-Afterward of Jessica Whyte’s The Morals of the Market

Week Nine: Origins of Critical Approaches to Rights (October 19th-23rd)
Read Karl Marx’s “On the Jewish Question”
Read Chapter One to Six of Costas Douzinas’ The End of Human Rights

Week Ten: Feminist Approaches to Rights (October 26th-30th)
Read Tracy Higgins “Review of Are Women Human: And Other Dialogues by Catherine MacKinnon.”
Read Chapter Seven to Ten of Costas Douzinas’ The End of Human Rights

Week Eleven: Rights and Groups (November 2nd-6th)
Read William Kymlicka. “Liberal Multiculturalism as Political Philosophy.”
Read Chapter Eleven to Conclusion of Costas Douzinas’ The End of Human Rights

Week Twelve: Right Wing Critiques of Rights (November 9th-13th)
Read Carl Schmitt. Political Theology
Read Edmund Burke. Reflections on the Revolution in France Selected Excerpts

Week Thirteen: Concluding Remarks and Review (November 16th-19th)
No Readings