

SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS

Discipline: Political Science

Summer 2009

PLIR 331Z: Ethics and Human Rights in World Affairs

Upper Division

Prof. Michael Joseph Smith

How should we conceive of ethical choice and ideas of human rights in the world of states? Has the end of the Cold War meant that cosmopolitan ideals now hold greater sway among states than traditional ideas of national interests? Or have terrorism, the “war on terror,” and continuing civil and ethnic conflicts undermined the (fragile) global network of legal and normative restraints? This course considers ideas of philosophers like Thucydides and Kant in addition to concrete cases and dilemmas taken from contemporary global affairs. We will pay special attention to controversies surrounding the definitions of human rights, the justification and conduct of war, issues of humanitarian intervention, and the moral responsibilities of leaders and citizens.

Course Objective: Students should be able to define a consistent ethical position of their own and then apply this position to contemporary issues of international relations. Lectures, discussions, writing assignments, and readings are all designed with this overarching goal in mind.

Suggested Pre-requisites: A previous course in international relations and/or political theory.

Course Requirements include:

- One 5-7 page (1000-1500 word) mid-term essay (from set questions) due on ***Tuesday June 30th***. (This will count for 30% of the final grade; late papers will be penalized.)
- Two short oral reports and journal entries (2-3 pages) based on our Faculty Practica in ports (20%)
- Active, prepared, and consistent participation in class discussions. (10%)
- The three-hour final examination on ***Wednesday August 19th*** (40%). A substantial portion of this examination can be prepared in advance.

As part of these requirements, each student should regularly follow the progress of a current international issue of relevance to the ports on our journey. For example one could follow specific (domestic or international) responses to the terrorist attack of 9/11/2001; or the situation in Iraq and throughout the Middle East; the human rights implications of membership in the EU; or the human rights situation in a particular context (e.g. Kurds in Turkey, the HIV-AIDS epidemic, Darfur, the treatment of prisoners). Your task will be to read online a reputable newspaper (such as *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, or the *Christian Science Monitor*) regularly and keep an informal journal about your issue. At least one question on the final exam will be directed to this continuing project.

Outline of Classes and Readings

I. *The Problem of Morality in International Affairs*

A. *Introduction: Moral Argument*

(June 18, 19, 20)

Mise en Scène—Several short articles on recent events, *Website*.

William K. Frankena, *Ethics*, Second edition, chapters 1-3, 6.

Isaiah Berlin, “My Intellectual Path,” *Course Website*. (Focus on the sections starting with “Pluralism.”)

B. *Raison d’etat versus Cosmopolitanism*

1. “Realism”-- Classical and Modern

(June 21, 22)

Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, Book I: *paragraphs* 1-88, 118-146; Book II: ¶¶34-65; Book III: ¶¶36-50, 69-85; Book V: ¶¶84-116. (Note that the assignment is by *paragraphs*, not *pages*, to accommodate owners of different editions of the book; these key passages are available on the *Course Website*.)

Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation” in H.H. Gerth and C.W. Mills (editors), *From Max Weber*, pages 77 ff. Pay special attention to pages 77-95 and 115-128., (*Course Website*).

Michael Joseph Smith, *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger*, chapters 1, 2, 4-6. (*Course Website*).

2. Kantian Cosmopolitanism

(June 23, 28)

Immanuel Kant, “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose”, “On the Relationship of Theory to Practice...”, “Perpetual Peace,” various editions; preferred translation is in the Cambridge edition, *Kant’s Political Writings*.

C. *Theory and the Limits of Ethical Action*

(February June 29-30)

Smith, *Realist Thought*, chapter 9, *Course Website*.

N.B. Midterm Essay is due on Tuesday June 30.

II. *Human Rights*

A. *Debates on Foundations and Definitions; the “Capabilities Approach”* (July 6, 11)

Micheline Ishay, ed., *The Human Rights Reader, Second Edition, 2007*: Introduction (pp. xxi-xxvii); pp. 93-104; , chapter 7, entire (pp. 163-189); plus page 190-94.

Amartya Sen, “Human Rights and Asian Values,” *Website*.

Martha Nussbaum, “Women and Cultural Universals,” *Website*.

B. *Agreements and Institutions versus Practices* (July 17, 23, 28)

Ishay, ed., *The Human Rights Reader, Second Edition*, in Part 6 (Chapter 15). (Pay special attention to the documents comprising the international “bill of rights,” i.e. the UDHR, the Genocide Convention, the ICCPR, ICESCR, selections 15.8-9, 15.12-13)

Rupert Emerson, “The Fate of Human Rights in the Third World,” *Course Website* .

Julie A. Mertus, *The United Nations and Human Rights*, chap. 1-4; students will divide U.N. institutions to present in class.

C. “*Humanitarian” Intervention for Human Rights?* (July 29, August 4)

1. Conceptual Issues

Michael Joseph Smith, "Ethics and Intervention," and “Humanitarian Intervention: An Overview of the Issues,” *Course Website*.

Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, chapter 6

Ishay, ed., *The Human Rights Reader*, pp. 456-475.

International Commission on Sovereignty and Intervention, *The Responsibility to Protect*, *Course Website*.

2. Cases of Inaction and Action: Rwanda, Darfur, Iraq (August 5, 7, 8)

Samantha Power, “Bystanders to Genocide;” “Rwanda: The Two Faces of Justice;” “Dying in Darfur, *Website*.

Selection of articles on the Iraq intervention available on the *Course Website*.

III. Ethics and the Use of Force

A. Classical Just War Theory

(August 13)

Ishay, ed., *The Human Rights Reader, Second Edition*, Chapter 3, (pp. 60-73).

National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Challenge of Peace*, ¶¶68-122, (*Website*).

B. Jus ad bellum: Aggression and Self-Defense

(August 14, 15)

Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, Parts I and II.

Michael Joseph Smith, “Growing up with *Just and Unjust Wars*,” *website*.

Julie A. Mertus, *The United Nations and Human Rights*, chapter 5.

C. Jus in bello: War-fighting, “Necessity,” War Crimes, Terrorism, and the Debate on Torture (April 16, 21, 23)

Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, chapters 8-9; 11-14; 16.

Judith N. Shklar, “The Liberalism of Fear,” in *Political Thought and Political Thinkers*, (*Course Website*).

Ishay, ed., *The Human Rights Reader*, pages 107-113 (Becarria); pp. 437-456.

Stephen Holmes, “Is Defiance of Law Proof of Success? Magical Thinking in the War on Terror,” in Greenberg, *The Torture Debate in America*, (*Course Website*).

IV. Conclusion: Prospects for Ethics and Human Rights

(August 16)

Field Component:

In at least two ports, students will have an opportunity to visit a human organization or government official with responsibility for human rights. They should arrange to join the class on at least *one* of these occasions. In addition, on their own, students should take the opportunity to engage a human rights issues in two additional ports, for example, by visiting a local NGO office, following a local issue, discussing, and/or observing respectfully a local practice that has implications for common conceptions of human rights. Two short journal entries and brief oral reports to the class will document this assignment.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

AUTHOR: Walzer, Michael
TITLE: *JUST & UNJUST WARS, 4th edition*
PUBLISHER: Basic
ISBN #: 978-0465037070
DATE/EDITION: 4th, 2006
COST: 19.95

AUTHOR: Hans Reiss, Editor
TITLE: *Kant's Political Writings*
PUBLISHER: Cambridge
ISBN #: 978-0521398374
DATE/EDITION: 1991
COST: 20.99

AUTHOR: Ishay, Micheline
TITLE: *Human Rights Reader: Major Political Essays, Speeches, and Documents from the Bible to the Present*
PUBLISHER: Routledge
ISBN #: 978-0415951609
DATE/EDITION: 2007, Second
COST: 27.95

AUTHOR: Frankena, William
TITLE: *Ethics*
PUBLISHER: Prentice-Hall
ISBN #: 978-0132904780
DATE/EDITION: 1973, Second
COST: 42.50 (ouch)

AUTHOR: Mertus, Julie
TITLE: *The United Nations and Human Rights*
PUBLISHER: Routledge
ISBN #: 978-0415343381
DATE/EDITION: 2005
COST: 31.95

RESERVE LIBRARY LIST

Please place on reserve the five books I have ordered as texts for the students, plus:

AUTHOR: Ian Brownlie and G. Goodwin-Gill
TITLE: Basic Documents on Human Rights
PUBLISHER: Oxford
ISBN #: 978-0199279838
DATE/EDITION: 2006, 5th edition
COST: \$60.00

AUTHOR: THUCYDIDES (Rex Warner, tr.; M.I. Finley, ed.)
TITLE: HISTORY OF PELOPONNESIAN WAR
PUBLISHER: Penguin Classics
ISBN #: 978-0140440393
DATE/EDITION: Revised, 1972
COST: 15.00

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Access to free news websites: www.nytimes.com ; <http://www.guardian.co.uk/> ; www.un.org , etc.