

Anthropology of Human Rights
Anth 70900
Graduate Center
City University of New York
T 4:15-6:15pm -Room 6494

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Fall 2002
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This course brings the tools of anthropology to bear on the study of human rights. Where anthropology is committed to exploring the diversity of human experience the human rights movement seeks the recognition of universal norms that transcend political and cultural difference. To what extent can these two goals be reconciled? What can anthropology tell us about the limits of the human rights movement?

The seminar will briefly examine the source of the debate between universalism and relativism and discuss how anthropology and anthropologists have dealt with human rights issues in the places they have worked and what effects their positions and actions have had on the understanding of the human rights movement in the world today. The course surveys cases from various parts of the world with an emphasis on cases from Latin America.

FORMAT: The class will be run mainly on a seminar format with students responsible for leading weekly discussions. There will be some lectures by the instructor or guest speakers followed by class discussion, student presentations and videos.

GRADING:

Five short reaction papers 20%
One book review 20%
At least one individual class presentation (10-20 minutes) 20%
A research paper due December 10 20%
Class participation 20%

READINGS:

Jane Cowan, Marie-Bénédicte Dembour and Richard Wilson. 2001. Culture and Rights. Anthropological Perspectives. Cambridge University Press.
Michael Mello. 1997. Dead Wrong. A Death Row Lawyer Speaks Out Against Capital Punishment. University of Wisconsin Press.
-Leigh Binford. 1996. The El Mozote Massacre. Anthropology and Human Rights. University of Arizona Press.
-Paul Farmer. In press. Pathologies of Power. University of California Press.

Additional (Suggested) Readings:

- Jack Donnelly. 1989. Universal Human Rights In Theory and Practice. NY, Cornell University Press.
-Gourevitch, Philip. We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We will be killed with our families: Stories from Rwanda. 1998, Picador.
-June Nash. 2001. Mayan Visions. The Quest for Autonomy In An Age of Globalization. NY, Routledge.
-Ramos, Alcida. Sanuma Memories: Yanomami Ethnography in Times of Crisis, 1995.
-Jeffrey Wasserstrom, Lynn Hunt and Marilyn Young, editors. 2000. Human Rights and Revolutions. Rowman & Littlefield.
-Wilkinson, Daniel. 2002. Silence on the Mountain. Stories of Terror, Betrayal and Forgetting in Guatemala. Houghton Mifflin.
-Richard Wilson, editor. 1997. Human Rights, Culture and Context. Anthropological Perspectives. Pluto Press.

COURSE SYLLABUS:

9/3 Introduction

9/10 Human Rights and Anthropological Perspectives

- Donnelly, Jack. "The Concept of Human Rights." In: Donnelly, Jack, op.cit., pp. 9-27.
- Donnelly, Jack. "Non-Western Conceptions of Human Rights" In: op.cit., pp.49-65.
-Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. "Between Universalism and Relativism: A Critique of the UNESCO Concept of Culture." In: Cowan, Jane, editor, 2001, pp.127-148.
-Messer, Ellen. "Anthropology and Human Rights." In: Annual Review of Anthropology, 1993, 22, pp. 221-49.

9/17 No Classes

9/24 Colonialism and the Internationalization of Human Rights.

-American Anthropologist. "Statement on Human Rights." 1947, #49, pp. 539-543.
- Hunt, Lynn. "The Paradoxical Origins of Human Rights." In: Wasserstrom, Hunt & Young, 2000, pp. 3-17.
- Bernault, Florence. "What Absence is Made Of: Human Rights in Africa." In: Wasserstrom, Hunt & Young, editors, op.cit, 2000, pp. 127-141.
- Renteln, Alison D. 1990. "The Development of International Human Rights Standards." In: International Human Rights. Universalism Versus Relativism, pp. 17-38.
- Renteln, Alison. 1990. "Relativism Revisited." In: op.cit., pp.61-87.
- Rieff, David. "A New Age of Liberal Imperialism?" In: Wasserstrom et al, 2000, op.cit, pp.177-190.

10/1 Indigenous Peoples and European Law

-Collier, Jane F. "Models of Indigenous Justice in Chiapas, Mexico: A Comparison of State and Zinacantan Visions." In: PoLAR, 22(1), May 1999, pp. 94-100.
- "The San Andrés Accords on Indigenous Rights and Culture." In: Cultural Survival Quarterly, Spring 1999, pp. 33-38.
-Gledhill, John. "Liberalism, Socio-Economic Rights and the Politics of Identity: From Moral Economy to Indigenous Rights." In: Richard Wilson, 1997, pp. 70-110.
-Messer, Ellen. "Anthropology and Human Rights in Latin America." In: Journal of Latin American Anthropology, 1996, pp. 48-97.
-Stavenhagen, Rodolfo. "Indigenous Rights. Some Conceptual Problems." In: Constructing Democracy. Human Rights, Citizenship, and Society in Latin America. E.

10/8 Nation-States and Human Rights

- Asad, Talal. "On Torture, Or Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment." In: Wilson, R. op.cit, 1997, pp. 111-133.
- Basombrío Iglesias, Carlos. "Sendero Luminoso and Human Rights: A Perverse Logic that Captured the Country." In: Wasserstrom, Hunt & Young, 2000, pp. 155-173.
- Kiss, Elizabeth. "Is Nationalism Compatible with Human Rights? Reflections on East-Central Europe." In: Sarat, Austin and Thomas Kearns, Identities, Politics, and Rights, 1999, pp. 367-402.
- Samson, Colin. "Rights As the Reward For Simulated Cultural Sameness: the Innu in the Canadian Colonial Context." In: Cowan, J. et al, 2001, pp. 226-248.
- Sullivan, Mercer and Barbara Miller. "Adolescent Violence, State Processes, and the Local Context of Moral Panic." In: Heyman, J, editor, 1999. States and Illegal Practices: An Overview, NY, Berg, pp. 261-283.

10/15 State Terror and Human Rights Abuses: Central America

- Binford, Leigh. The "El Mozote" Massacre: Anthropology and Human Rights. Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 1996.
- Schirmer, Jennifer. "Universal and Sustainable Human Rights? Special Tribunals in Guatemala." In: Wilson, R. 1997, pp.161-186.
- Sieder, Rachel & Jessica Witchell. "Advancing indigenous claims through the law: reflections on the Guatemalan peace process." In: Jane Cowan et al. editors, pp201-225.
- Stoll, David. "To Whom Should We Listen? Human Rights Activism in Two Guatemalan Land Disputes." In: Wilson, R. 1997, pp. 187-215.
- Wilson, Richard. "Representing Human Rights Violations: Social Contexts and Subjectivities." In: Wilson, R. 1997, pp. 134-160.
- I Rigoberta Menchú by Elizabeth R. Debray vs. David Stoll's Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of all Guatemalans.

10/22 People on the Move: Transnationalism, Globalization and Human Rights

- Finnegan, William. "The Invisible War." In: The New Yorker. Jan 25,1999, pp. 50-73.
- Gallant, Thomas. "Brigandage, Piracy, Capitalism, and State-Formation: Transnational Crime from a Historical World-Systems Perspective." In: Heyman, J., op.cit, pp. 25-61.
- Gourevitch, Philip. We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We will be killed with our families: Stories from Rwanda. 1998, Picador.
- Nevins, Joseph. "Conclusion. Searching for Security in an Age of Intensifying Globalization." In: Operation Gatekeeper. The Rise of the "Illegal Alien" and the Making of the U.S.-Mexico Boundary, 2002, Routledge, pp. 165-188.
- Ong, Aihwa. "Zones of New Sovereignty." In: Flexible Citizenship. The Cultural Logics of Transnationality. Duke, 1999, pp. 214-239.
- Sassen, Saskia. "The Transnationalization of Immigration Policy." In: Borderless Borders. U.S. Latinos, Latin Americans, and the Paradox of Interdependence. Bonilla, Frank, E. Meléndez et al, editors, 1998, Temple University Press, pp. 53-67.
- Schwab, Peter & A. Pollis. "Globalization's Impact on Human Rights." In: Polis & Schwab, 2000, op.cit., pp. 209-223.
- Schneider, Jane & Peter Schneider. "Is Transparency Possible? The Political-Economic and Epistemological Implications of Cold War Conspiracies and Subterfuge in Italy." In: Heyman, 1999, op.cit., pp. 169-198.

10/29 Health and Human Rights

- Annas, George. "The Impact of Health Policies on Human Rights: AIDS and TB Control." In: Health and Human Rights. A Reader. J. Mann, S. Gruskin, et al., editors, 1999, pp. 37-45.
- Chomsky, Aviva. "The Threat of a Good Example": Health and Revolution in Cuba." In: Dying for Growth. Global Inequality and the Health of the Poor. Jim Yong Kim, et al, editors, 2000, Common Courage Press, Partners in Health, pp. 331-357.
- Farmer, Paul and Didi Bertrand. "Hypocrisies of Development and the Health of the Poor." In: Kim, et al, op.cit, 2000, pp. 65-89.
- Farmer, Paul. "Pathologies of Power. Rethinking Health and Human Rights." In: Journal of Public Health, October 1999, 89, #10, pp. 1486-96.
- Farmer, Paul. In Press. Pathologies of Power. University of California Press.
- Johnston, Barbara R. "Human Environmental Rights." In: Human Rights. New Perspectives, New Realities, A. Pollis & Peter Schwab, 2000, pp. 95-113.
- Holst, Eric. "The Role of Health Professionals in Promoting Human Rights", pp. 71-79.

11/5 Race and Human Rights

- Comaroff, John. "The Discourse of Rights in Colonial South Africa: Subjectivity, Sovereignty, Modernity." In: Sarat & Kearns, 1995, pp. 193-236.
- Fisher, William W. III. "Ideology and Imagery in the Law of Slavery." 68 Chicago-Kent Law Review, 1051 (1993): 1-14.
- Hasenbalg, Carlos. "Racial Inequalities in Brazil and Throughout Latin America: Timid Responses to Disguised Racism." In: Jelin & Hershberg, editors, opcit, 1996, pp.161-175.
- Minow, Martha. "Rights and Cultural Difference." In: Sarat & Kearns, 1995:347-365.
- Ramos, Alcida. Sanuma Memories: Yanomami Ethnography in Times of Crisis, 1995.

11/12 Women and Human Rights & Children's Rights

- Gourevitch, Philip. "A Husband for Dil." In: The New Yorker, February 1999, pp. 78-102.
- Jelin, Elizabeth. "Women, Gender, and Human Rights." In: Jelin & Hershberg, editors, opcit, 1996, pp. 177-196.
- Mead, Rebecca. "Eggs for Sale" In: The New Yorker, August 1999, pp. 56-65.
- Merry, Sally. "Wife Battering and the Ambiguities of Rights." In: Sarat & Kearns, 1995, pp. 271-306.
- Montgomery, Heather. "Imposing Rights? A Case Study of Child Prostitution in Thailand." In: Cowan, Jane, Dembour and Wilson, pp. 80-101.
- Ross, Fiona. "Speech and Silence: Women's Testimony in the First Five Weeks of Public Hearings of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission." In: Kleinman, Arthur et al, editors. Remaking a World. Violence, Social Suffering, and Recovery, 2001, pp. 250-279.

11/19 Prisons

- Caldeira, Teresa. "Crime and Individual Rights: Reframing the Question of Violence in Latin America." In: Jelin, E. & Hershberg, E. editors, 1996, op.cit, pp. 197-211.
- Foucault, Michel. "The Carceral." In: Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison. New York, 1999, Vintage Books.
- Sorensen, Ben. "Monitoring of Prisons." In: Human Rights and Health Professionals.

11/23 **Death Penalty**

-Mello, Michael. 1997. Dead Wrong. A Death Row Lawyer Speaks Against the Death Penalty. Madison, University of Wisconsin Press.

12/3 **Papers Due. Final presentations**

12/10 **Wrap-Up and Conclusions**

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