

**Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Policy**

**(SIS 419-030; SIS 619-023)**

**American University  
School of International Service  
Fall 2009; Wed. 2:10-4:50**

**Professor Julie Mertus  
202-885-2215; 410-532-0423**

***COURSE SUMMARY:***

The purpose of this course is two-fold. First, the course seeks to impart information about the nature and significance of human rights in U.S. foreign policy. For the student of human rights, the course adds a foreign policy dimension; for the student of foreign policy, the course adds a human rights dimension; and for all students, the course provides the opportunity to think about the complex, dynamic relationship between the two fields. Second, the course also teaches skills in policy analysis and provides students with an opportunity to improve their writing skills. Frequent written assignments and unusually rapid and frequent feedback from the instructor enhance the skill-building objectives of this course. The use of video clips and power points keep the class timely and focused, while at the same time opening the class to new, and often conflicting ideas.

Having completed this course, students should be able to:

- Understand how human rights factor into the U.S. foreign policy making process;
- Discuss the role played by various civilian and military actors and institutions in this process;
- Identify historical trends in the relationship between human rights and U.S. foreign policy;
- Debate with authority contemporary developments pertaining to the usage of human rights in U.S. foreign policy; and
- Think creatively and effectively about whether and when the U.S. has the responsibility to address international human rights problems.

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*This course complements, but does not duplicate other human right courses offered at the School of International Service and it is open to law students, masters students and undergraduates without any prerequisites.*

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Completion of Bi-Weekly Assignment: (50% of grade – Each assignment is weighted equally). Eight weekly assignments are on the syllabus. Students are to finish five of their choice, plus the “Obama Assignment” (for a total of six) Assignments are to be handed in at the beginning of class. Emailed assignments are considered late (barring exceptional circumstances).
2. Participation in class: (25% of grade).  
Class participation will take many forms, from simulations to broad discussion of the readings and “viewings.” Students will have two occasions to suggest a participation grade for themselves – at mid-term and at the closure to the term.
3. Case Study Paper: Students will be randomly placed in groups of three or four. Together, they will choose one state or area of study (such as The Balkans or West Africa) and divide the topic into separate presentations. For example, you might consider the history of U.S. human rights foreign policy with respect to that area, the specific impact of certain events – such as the Cold War or 911, and the future directions of U.S. foreign policy in that area. Although each group will give one presentation, and teamwork is important, the individual papers will be graded separately.

### *Grading criteria:*

1. Demonstration of having read and understood the readings.
2. Ability to apply course materials.
3. Professional presentation, with attention to clarity and organization as well as spelling and general proofreading (note: spelling and proofing mistakes are ok on the discussion board, but not in the assignments).
4. Creativity and effort.
5. Responsiveness to suggestions and improvement over time.

## **REQUIRED READINGS:**

Julie Mertus, “Bait and Switch: Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Policy” Routledge, 2008 (be sure to obtain the **second edition**).

Other readings available via a direct hotlink on syllabus. or are posted on Blackboard.

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## August 26<sup>th</sup>: Film “Voices of the Innocents”

### Sept. 2:

## Human Rights Foreign Policy: A History and Context

(with Latin America case study)

### Reading/Viewing:

Apodaca, Chapters 2 and 4 in *Understanding U.S. Human Rights Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

Bergman, "First Do No Harm: U.S. Foreign Policy and Respect for Human Rights in El Salvador and Guatemala 1980-1986, 267-298 in Fenton, *Implementing U.S. Human Rights Policy* (Washington DC, USIP. 2007).

Hook and Spanier, Chapters 7& 8 in *American Foreign Policy Since World War II* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2000)(15<sup>th</sup> edition).

Latin Pulse/ Human Rights

<http://video.google.com/videosearch?q=human+rights+contras+latin+america&hl=en&emb=0&aq=f#q=human+rights+contras+latin+america&hl=en&emb=0&aq=f&start=0>

Latin Pulse- U.S. Security and Latin America

<http://video.google.com/videosearch?q=human+rights+contras+latin+america&hl=en&emb=0&aq=f#q=human+rights+contras+latin+america&hl=en&emb=0&aq=f&start=0>

CIA Jet

<http://video.google.com/videosearch?q=human+rights+contras+latin+america&hl=en&emb=0&aq=f#q=human+rights+contras+latin+america&hl=en&emb=0&aq=f&start=0Ch>

### Power point 1: Context

**Assignment:** *Choose one* – Write 800-1500 word essay; mail directly to [humanrightscouncil@american.edu](mailto:humanrightscouncil@american.edu) AND to [mertus@american.edu](mailto:mertus@american.edu)  
Be sure to begin the subject line of the email “Assignment one”

- Analyze the impact of world politics on international human rights discourse and in the impact of human rights on world politics. (You might want to use one of the “Latin Pulse” videos in your essay, but this is not required.

Or

- Write the transcript of an imaginary debate the on the ways in which U.S. human rights foreign policy has responded to what it perceives as threats in Latin America.

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## **Sept. 9:**

### **Human Rights Foreign Policy: Who? (with Iran and South Africa case studies)**

#### **Reading/Viewing:**

Crabb and Holt, "The Human Rights Issue" Chapter 7 in *Invitation to struggle: Congress, the president, and foreign policy*. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1992).

Barnes, "U.S. Human Rights Policy in Chile," pp. 85-112 in Fenton, *Implementing U.S. Human Rights Policy* (Washington DC, USIP. 2007).

Apodaca, Chapter 5 in *Understanding U.S. Human Rights Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

Baker, "Getting It Right: U.S. Human Rights Policy in South Africa," pp. 85-112 in Fenton, *Implementing U.S. Human Rights Policy* (Washington DC, USIP. 2007).

Riz Kahn, "U.S./Iran Relations"

<http://video.google.com/videosearch?q=human+rights+contras+latin+america&hl=en&emb=0&aq=f#q=human+rights+u.s.+foreign+policy+iran&hl=en&emb=0>

Code Pink, "Pushing for Peace with Iran"

<http://video.google.com/videosearch?q=human+rights+contras+latin+america&hl=en&emb=0&aq=f#q=human+rights+u.s.+foreign+policy+iran&hl=en&emb=0>

#### **Powerpoint 2: Who**

#### **Assignment:**

E-mail directly to [humanrightscouncil@american.edu](mailto:humanrightscouncil@american.edu) AND to [mertus@american.edu](mailto:mertus@american.edu)  
Be sure to begin the subject line of the email "Assignment two"

*Two choices:*

Make two timelines next to each other: (1) a timeline including 5-8 major events in the course of U.S. human rights foreign policy with respect to Iran and Iraq and juxtapose it with roughly the same number of events for the same time period

covering U.S. foreign policy with respect to the Soviet Union or any particular “East Block” country.

Or

Write a 1,000 word essay comparing U.S. human rights foreign policy in Iran to U.S. human rights foreign policy in South Africa.

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## **Sept 16: Simulation on the Cold War (to be handed out on the 9<sup>th</sup> and “performed” on the 16<sup>th</sup>)**

### **Read Also:**

Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, Staff Report: Covert Action in Chile 1963 – 1973, 94<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 1975. <http://www.fas.org/irp/ops/policy/church-chile.htm>

Jack Matlock, “U.S. Policy in Human Rights in Relations with the USSR< 1961-1991, pp. 245-265 in Liang-Fenton.

## **Sept 23<sup>rd</sup> -- How? The “Softer” Tools of Human Rights and Foreign Policy: Diplomacy, Courts and Foreign Aid (China/USSR case studies)**

### **Readings/Viewing:**

Carter and Jackson, "The International Criminal Court: Present at the Creation?" pp 364-386 in R.G. Carter ed. *Contemporary Cases in U.S. Foreign Policy: From Terrorism to Trade* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2002).

Matlock, “U.S. Policy in Human Rights Relations with the USSR 1961-1991," pp. 85-112 in Fenton, *Implementing U.S. Human Rights Policy* (Washington DC, USIP. 2007).

Grause, “Can Democracy Stop Terrorism?" *Foreign Affairs* 84(5), Sep/Oct 2005, pp. 62-76.

The US & China: Human Rights

<http://www.viddler.com/explore/seepress/videos/132/>

Paying the Price (Sanctions in Iraq)

<http://video.google.com/videosearch?q=human+rights+contras+latin+america&hl=en&emb=0&aq=f#q=human+rights+u.s.+foreign+policy+sanctions&hl=en&emb=0f>

Cuba's Foreign Minister on Impact of Sanctions

<http://video.google.com/videosearch?q=human+rights+contras+latin+america&hl=en&emb=0&aq=f#q=human+rights+u.s.+foreign+policy+sanctions&hl=en&emb=0>

### **Powerpoint 3: How**

#### **In-class viewing: Nixon tape**

#### **Assignment:**

Email directly to [humanrightscouncil@american.edu](mailto:humanrightscouncil@american.edu) AND to [mertus@american.edu](mailto:mertus@american.edu)  
Be sure to begin the subject line of the email "Assignment three"

*Two choices:*

Develop a ten to fifteen minute powerpoint presentation identifying the main arguments for and against using foreign aid as an inducement for states to improve their human rights record. You may make an argument for one side or the other, but be sure to do so after a presentation of all the main issues on both sides.

Or

Compare U.S. human rights foreign policy toward China and the USSR. Who are the main actors? What do they want? Who wins and who loses? Why? How does U.S. rhetoric and behavior change over time? (1,200-1,500 words)

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## **Sept 30: Military**

### **The "Hard" Tools of Human Rights and Foreign Policy**

#### **Reading:/viewing**

Apodaca, Chapter 6 in *Understanding U.S. Human Rights Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

Mertus, Bait and Switch, Chapter 3

Mertus on Humanitarian Intervention

[http://www.cceia.org/resources/journal/15\\_1/review\\_essay/legitimizing\\_use\\_force\\_Kosovo](http://www.cceia.org/resources/journal/15_1/review_essay/legitimizing_use_force_Kosovo)

Redefining Sovereignty and Intervention [Full Text] Joelle Tanguy, Vol. 17.1, Spring 2003 The International Commission on Interven  
[http://www.cceia.org/resources/journal/17\\_1/review\\_essays/4446.html](http://www.cceia.org/resources/journal/17_1/review_essays/4446.html)

Humanitarian Intervention: A Forum,” June 26, 2003  
<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20030714/forum>

Jules Lobel and Michael Ratner, Humanitarian Military Intervention, Foreign Policy in Focus, vol. 5(1)(January 2000) [www.fpif.org/briefs/vol5/v5n01hmi.html](http://www.fpif.org/briefs/vol5/v5n01hmi.html)

#### **Powerpoint 4: Humanitarian Intervention**

#### **In-class viewing: School of the Assassins**

#### **Assignment:**

Email directly to [humanrightscouncil@american.edu](mailto:humanrightscouncil@american.edu) AND to [mertus@american.edu](mailto:mertus@american.edu)  
Be sure to begin the subject line of the email “Assignment four”

Choose one of two assignments:

a) Write imaginary dialogue between two activists representing opposite sides on the matter of U.S. Military interventions for human rights. Don't peg it to any particular case, but in the argument refer to specific a specific conflict or a series of conflicts (i.e., Rwanda, Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan).

b) Write imaginary dialogue between two U.S. military officers representing opposite sides on the matter of U.S. Military interventions for human rights. Don't peg it to any particular case, but in the argument refer to specific a specific conflict or a series of conflicts (i.e., Rwanda, Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan).

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### **Oct: 7: Class Presentation Day 1**

### **Oct 14: US Presidents: Human Rights and Democracy Promotion**

#### **Reading/Viewing**

Mertus, chapter 2 in *Bait and Switch*

Smith, "After the Cold War: Wilsonianism Resurgent," chapter 11 in *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Smith, "Liberal Democratic Institutionalism" Chapter 9 in *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

The Jacksonian Tradition and American Foreign Policy"

Walter Russell Mead, *The National Interest* 58, Winter 1999/2000, pp. 5-29.

Beijing criticises US on human rights record - 21 Oct 08

[//www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2eKfd62BMY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2eKfd62BMY)

US & China: The Human Rights Issue

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mprefemmPY\\_E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mprefemmPY_E)

Nixon in China

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5V9sP\\_nDCM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5V9sP_nDCM)

## **Powerpoint 5: The Presidents**

### **In-class viewing: Carter address and Nixon Tape**

#### **Assignment:**

Email directly to [humanrightscouncil@american.edu](mailto:humanrightscouncil@american.edu) AND to [mertus@american.edu](mailto:mertus@american.edu)  
Be sure to begin the subject line of the email "Assignment five"

- Wilsonianism, and/or Jeffersonianism? Choose an issue from this week's readings and analyze how each of these concepts could be applied. Which approach do you like best? Why? (1,000-1,600 words)

or

Write the first 1,200-2,000 words of a novel that begins with Nixon's trip to China either not occurring, or occurring but not in the manner envisioned by history. What would the world look like if things were different?  
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## **Oct. 21: Class Presentation Day 2**

## **Oct. 28: U.S. Human Rights Foreign Policy Under the Bush Administration**

### **Readings/ viewing:**

Julie Mertus, Bait and Switch, Chapter 1 (review) and 4-5

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/12/11/AR2008121102952.html>

<http://www.usaid.gov/press/factsheets/2008/fs081009.html>

<http://www.usaid.gov/press/factsheets/2008/fs080724.html>

<http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/nspd-58fs.html>

<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/58981/paula-j-dobriansky-and-thomas-carothers/democracy-promotion>

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/08/AR2009030801493.html>

President George Bush, Graduation Speech at West Point, June 1, 2002.  
[<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020601-3.html>]

“What I’ve Learned About U.S. Foreign Policy”

<http://video.google.com/videosearch?q=human+rights+contras+latin+america&hl=en&emb=0&aq=f#q=human+rights+u.s.+foreign+policy+iran&hl=en&emb=0>

### **Assignment:**

Email directly to [humanrightscouncil@american.edu](mailto:humanrightscouncil@american.edu) AND to [mertus@american.edu](mailto:mertus@american.edu)  
Be sure to begin the subject line of the email “Assignment one”

You work for a newly elected Congressman who would like you to write a memo on “the legacy of the human rights foreign policy of the Bush administration.” You read BAIT AND SWITCH and you think you have it down, but then you read a series of Washington Post articles and you are unsure. What do you end up concluding? You have 1,200-2,000 words,

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## **Nov. 4: Class Presentation Day 3**

## **Nov. 11: Who Monitors Human Rights in U.S. Foreign Policy**

### **Reading:**

Julie Mertus, *Bait and Switch*, chapters 4-5

Farnaz Fassihi and Steve Stecklow, "Behind Bars: Finding U.S. Abuse in Iraq Left Red Cross Team in a Quandary; Not Used to Seeing Such Acts By a Developed Country, Some Debated Exposing It: An Inspection of Cellblock 1A," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 21, 2004. pp. A1.

Human Rights Watch, "No Blood, No Foul: Soldiers' Accounts of Detainee Abuse in Iraq: Summary," [[http://hrw.org/reports/2006/us0706/1.htm#\\_Toc141074582](http://hrw.org/reports/2006/us0706/1.htm#_Toc141074582)]

Skim Web sites (as indicated in the assignment)

### **Assignment:**

Identify the advocacy strategy of the leading U.S.-based human rights NGOs on the monitoring of U.S. foreign policy. Examine the work of such groups as:

- Human Rights Watch
- Amnesty International (U.S. office)
- Global Rights
- Human Rights First
- Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights
- Physicians for Human Rights

Write a paper critically comparing the approaches among the organizations. Be sure to consider who wins and who loses under each approach. You may work alone or with a partner. Come to class prepared to present your findings.

## **Nov. 18: Class Presentation Day 4**

## **Dec 2: Obama and Human Rights Foreign Policy**

### **Assignment (mandatory):**

Identify the human rights strategy emerging in the Obama administration. Write a 1,000 word paper explaining the policy. Be sure to compare it with prior administrations. Attach copies of at least three sources. Be prepared to present your findings.

## **Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup>: Obama and Human Rights Foreign Policy Part 2**