

**Human Rights in Latin America**  
**SIS-419-021/SIS 619-001**  
**FALL 2011, Tuesdays 5:30-8 pm**

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What explains the horrific human rights abuses that took place in Latin America during the Cold War? How have patterns of human rights abuse changed since then, including after 9/11? What is the role of the US, and of international and national NGOs in the region's observance of political, socio-economic, indigenous and women's rights?

This course explores these and other questions through theory and case studies. It examines what rights are, which ones are observed and focused upon by states and by international actors, and whose are privileged in practice. The course examines some of the issues confronting human rights in Latin America today: how to remember, redress and repair human rights abuses under past authoritarian regimes; how to document and address rights abuses linked to the globalized movements of labor and people, as well as of indigenous peoples; what the role of the United States has been and should be; what the role of international and national NGOs is and ought to be; how to address non-political violence through human rights frameworks; and how to secure human rights in the region's armed conflicts.

Although numerous cases are touched upon, the course will draw heavily on several cases: Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Brazil, Uruguay, Ecuador & Haiti.

**Course Objectives:**

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- (a) think theoretically and creatively about human rights, international humanitarian law, and violence in Latin America;
- (b) analyze texts critically;
- (c) produce written and oral reviews of academic works that are persuasive and incisive;
- (d) work in a team and to make oral presentations in connection with negotiations over issues of peace, justice and human rights;
- (e) appraise the key challenges confronting rights activists and scholars in Latin America, and of their antecedents.

### **Required Books Available at the Bookstore:**

- Mark Danner, *The Massacre at El Mozote*, New York: Vintage (1994). (160 pp.)
- Lawrence Weschler, *A Miracle, A Universe: Settling Accounts with Torturers* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990)
- Virginia Bouvier, *Colombia: Building Peace in a Time of War* (USIP Press, 2009).
- Winifred Tate, *Counting the Dead* (Univ. of California Press, 2007)
- Suzana Sawyer, *Crude Chronicles: Indigenous Politics, Multinational Oil, and Neoliberalism in Ecuador* (Duke Univ Press, 2004).  
ISBN: 13 978-0-8223-3272-5 (paperbook)
- Kathryn Sikkink, *Mixed Signals: U.S. Human Rights Policy and Latin America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004).
- Paul Farmer, *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights and the New War on the Poor* (Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 2004)

### **Course Requirements & Grading**

**Readings:** Do all of the assigned readings. Otherwise, it will be difficult for you to participate, and you won't get as much out of the discussion. Through Blackboard, the articles and all readings should be available electronically, except for the required books. Please read the articles in the order presented, as I've arranged them with a certain logic in mind.

**60%: Four reading reviews (5 double-spaced pages).** The main writing assignment for this course consists of four 5-page reading reviews, due roughly every three weeks, BEFORE the reviewed readings are discussed. You will write a review of at least three of the readings (or an entire book, if one is assigned) for a given week from the syllabus. These will be the main vehicle for learning how to read and write critically and persuasively, and we will spend some time on them in class. If you wish to score well, you should go to my personal webpage and click on the appropriate links for "critical reviews"! Below is a quick summary of those more complete guidelines:

- (a) Provide an analysis of the readings / book, not a description. But provide enough information so that someone who has not read it is not lost. This is an art, and difficult.
- (b) Be critical – even if you end up agreeing with the author and liking the reading. Perhaps this means being critical of others...
- (c) Make an argument! The argument will be based on:
  - a. Statement of the author's purpose
  - b. Assessment of how well the purpose is achieved
  - c. Evidence supporting your assessment
- (d) Base your argument on what is there, not on what you wish were there.
- (e) Quote with care.
- (f) Structure your paper with a brief introductory and concluding paragraph.

Please submit your review (and all assignments) electronically as an attachment in Word (format: Firstname Lastname #2.doc) to me ([call@american.edu](mailto:call@american.edu)). Make sure that your name is on the paper and that pages are numbered please! Except for the first review, the reviews are due at noon the SAME DAY we discuss the reviewed readings in class. This means that you may not review readings from prior weeks (but may go as far ahead on the syllabus as you like).

**30%: Team Project.** Teams of three or four persons will choose a project to research from a list of approved topics, or you may suggest one for my approval. In each case the team will research the topic and make a 15-minute presentation in class late in the course. The team will be graded collectively and receive a single grade for the oral presentation with power point (15%) and for a collective written product linked to it (15%). Each student will play an equal role in the presentation and in preparing the collective written product. A sample of the possible topics appears below:

- a) **On the Need for a Truth Commission on the Genocide of Native Americans in the Americas (e.g., prima facie evidence of the need for such an investigation, a public call for an investigation, and ideas for remedies)**
- b) **Violence against Women in Mexico and Central America (eg, a report with recommendations for human rights NGOs, for the region's national governments, and for the international community, including the OAS)**
- c) **On Persecution and Discrimination against members of the LGBT Community in Latin America (e.g., a researched memo to HRW suggesting why they ought to pay more attention to this issue; or a similar memo to the OAS on this issue)**
- d) **A Call for Action to Suppress and Prevent Further Remobilization of former Paramilitaries in Colombia (eg, A Researched report with recommendations for the Colombian govt, for NGOs, and for the international community).**
- e) **A Plan of Action to Curtail the Exploitation of Indigenous Communities in the Andes by Natural Gas Companies (A plan analyzing the measures taken by the Morales government especially, as well as others, with specific proposals for measures to curb the exploitation of these communities and ensure their participation).**
- f) **A Tentative Plan for Transitional Justice, including possible measures of accountability with specific acts cited, for the Post-Transition Regime after President Hugo Chavez (or the Castro Brothers in Cuba)**
- g) **A Proposal for US Policy that will Enhancing Human Rights among Mexico's Police and Military Forces.**

The team will prepare a written product of some 15-20 pages. The character of the written product will depend on what makes sense for the particular case and who is the best target audience (the above suggestions may be modified with my approval). This will be a team effort and involve much preparatory work.

**10%: Class Participation:** Attendance is mandatory, and class participation in this graduate seminar is important. If you wish assistance in enhancing your participation, please let me know. More than one absence or lack of thoughtful participation in classroom discussions will lower your grade by one letter grade (possibly more for more absences).

**Late Assignment Penalties.** I do not accept late papers without penalty except in case of genuine emergency (health, family death or health crisis). The due dates for each written assignment are listed in the syllabus. If you are more than five minutes late to class when submitting an assignment, then your review will be downgraded by 1/3 letter grade (eg, B to B-).

Don't wait until the last minute to complete the reviews! Late reviews arriving after 10 pm will be downgraded by 2/3 letter-grade, and a full letter grade if in by 10 am the following day.

**Course Assignment Deadlines:**

<b>Friday Sept. 2 or 9</b>	<b><i>1<sup>st</sup> Reading Review Due at Noon</i></b>
<b>Tuesday Sept 20 or 27 or Oct 4</b>	<b><i>2<sup>nd</sup> Reading Review Due at Noon</i></b>
<b>Tuesday Oct. 11, 18 or Nov 1st, 8th</b>	<b><i>3<sup>rd</sup> Reading Review Due at Noon</i></b>
<b>Tuesday Nov. 29 or Dec. 13th</b>	<b><i>4<sup>th</sup> &amp; Final Reading Review Due at Noon</i></b>
<b>Monday, Dec. 5, 11 pm:</b>	<b><i>Written Team Product Due at 11 pm</i></b>

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**Session #1 (Aug. 30): Course Intro & Video**

Discussion of concepts, issues and expectations for the course.

Video: *Death and the Maiden* (1 hour 45 mins, based on Ariel Dorfman's play set in pseudo-Chile of the early 1990s). Half In-class, Half Out-of-class.

**Session #2 (Sept. 6): A Cold War Massacre : El Salvador's El Mozote**

Terry Karl, "El Salvador's Negotiated Revolution", *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1992.

Mark Danner, *The Massacre at El Mozote*, New York: Vintage (1994). (160 pp.)

**\*\* 1<sup>st</sup> Reading Review Due Friday Noon, (Sept. 9 on El Salvador OR Sept 16 on human rights concepts)!!!**

**Session #3 (Sept. 13): Human Rights: Which Rights, Whose Rights?**

Foundation Texts:

- (a) *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948)
- (b) *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1976)
- (c) *American Convention on Human Rights* (1969)
- (d) Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions (1949)

Jack Donnelly, *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Ithaca, NY : Cornell Univ. Press, 2002). Introduction plus Chapters 1 & 2, pp. 1-37.

Alison Dundes Renteln, "The Unanswered Challenge of Relativism and the Consequences for Human Rights," *Human Rights Quarterly*, 7,4 pp. 514-40.

Kenneth Roth, "Defending Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Practical Issues Faced by an International Human Rights Organization," *Human Rights Quarterly* 26,1 (2004), pp. 63-73.

James L. Cavallaro and Stephanie Erin Brewer, "Reevaluating Regional HRts Litigation in the 21st Century: The Case of the Inter-American Court" *American Journal of International Law* 102 (2008), pp. 768-827.

**Session #4 (Sept. 20): Secrecy and Amnesty (Brazil & Uruguay)**

Lawrence Weschler, *A Miracle, A Universe : Settling Accounts with Torturers* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990) (entire book)

**\*\* 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading Review Due TUESDAY NOON of same day we discuss (Sept 20 on Weschler; Sept 27 on Agency, Oct. 4 on TJ)!!!**

**Session #5 (Sept. 27): Globalization, Agency & Contemporary Rights Issues**

Amalia Lucia Cabezas, "Tourism, Sex Work, and Women's Rights in the Dominican Republic," in Alison Brysk (ed), *Globalization and Human Rights* (Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 2002), pp. 44-58.

James L. Bischoff, "Forced Labour in Brazil: International Criminal Law as the *Ultima Ratio* Modality of Human Rights Protection," *Leiden Journal of International Law* 2006, 151-193 [long article: focus on big picture of the phenomenon and different solutions].

Omar Encarnacion, "Latin America's Gay Rights Revolution," *Journal of Democracy* 22, 2 (April 2011), pp. 104-119.

Human Rights Watch, "You'll Learn Not to Cry: Child Combatants in Colombia," report, September 2003. Read ONLY "Summary" and "Recommendations" (pp. 3-18), and "5. Joining Up" (pp. 35-46).

**\*\* 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading Review Due Tuesday NOON (Sept 20 on Weschler; Sept 27 on Agency; Oct. 4 on TJ)!!!**

**Session #6 (Oct. 4): Transitional Justice**

Priscilla Hayner, "In Pursuit of Justice and Reconciliation: Contributions of Truth-Telling," from Cynthia Arnson, *Comparative Peace Processes in Latin America* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1999), pp. 363-388.

Catalina Diaz, "Challenging Impunity from Below: The Contested Ownership of Transitional Justice in Colombia," from Kieran McEvoy and Lorna McGregor, *Transitional Justice from Below*, (Portland, OR: Hart) 2008, pp. 189-216.

Susan Harris Rimmer, "Sexing the Subject of Transitional Justice," *Australian Feminist Law Journal*, (2010), 32, pp. 123-147.

**Guest Speaker:** Dr. Juan Mendez, early Argentine political prisoner freed after Amnesty campaign; founding director of Americas Watch; President of Inter-American Court, inaugural Senior Adviser on Genocide to the UN Secretary-General (2004-07); President of the Int'l Center

on Transitional Justice (ICTJ, 2004-08); and to cap it all off, alum of and Visiting Professor at our own School of Law.

**Session #7 (Oct. 11): US Foreign Policy and Human Rights in Latin America**

Kathryn Sikkink, *Mixed Signals: U.S. Human Rights Policy and Latin America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), entire book.

ALSO: Glance through Emilie M. Hafner-Burton and James Ron, "The Boomerang Market: Supply, Demand and the Geography of Human Rights Media Coverage," forthcoming in *International Organization*.

**Session #8 (Oct. 18): War and Peace in Colombia**

Virginia 'Ginny' Bouvier, *Colombia: Building Peace in a Time of War* (USIP Press, 2009), Chapters 1-7 (pp. 3-156).

Guest Speaker, Ginny Bouvier, author of our text and Program Associate of the US Institute of Peace.

**NO CLASS ON TUESDAY, OCT. 25!**

**Session #9 (Nov. 1): Corporations, Globalization, Resources & Rights (Ecuador)**

Suzana Sawyer, *Crude Chronicles: Indigenous Politics, Multinational Oil, and Neoliberalism in Ecuador*, entire book.

**Session #10 (Nov. 8): Social and Economic Justice: Haiti and a Critique of Conventional Rights Activism**

Paul Farmer, *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights and the New War on the Poor* (Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 2004), entire book.

**\*\* 3<sup>rd</sup> Reading Review Due Tuesday at Noon (Oct. 11 for Sikkink; Oct. 18 for Bouvier; Nov. 1 for Sawyer; Nov. 8 for Farmer)**

**Session #11 (Nov. 15): The Role of Human Rights NGOs and INGOs (Colombia)**

Recall/Review Sikkink Book on the role of NGOs, INGOs

Winifred Tate, *Counting the Dead*, entire book.

Recommended: James Ron, Harold Ramos and Kathleen Rodgers, "Transnational Information Politics and Human Rights Reporting, 1986-2000," *International Studies Quarterly* 49 (2005), 557-587.

**NO SESSION NOV. 22: Happy Thanksgiving!**

**Session #12 (Nov. 29): Human Rights, Hegemony & US Torture**

Darius Rejali, "Introduction," to his *Torture and Democracy* (Princeton, 2007), pp. 1-31.

Re-read Article 4 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Geneva Convention (relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War), plus Common Article 3. Do NOT count this as among three reviewed articles. You may just google it, or go to:

<http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/7c4d08d9b287a42141256739003e63bb/6fef854a3517b75ac125641e004a9e68>

Jane Mayer, Chapter 11, "Blowback," *The Dark Side: The Inside Story of How The War on Terror Turned into a War on American Ideals*. NY: Doubleday. 2008, pp. 261-295.

Kennedy School Case Study, "Defining Torture in the War on Terror (B): The Trail of the 'Torture Memo'," 2010, 20 pages. You must purchase this case study online from the Kennedy School of Government (KSG): go to [www.ksgcase.harvard.edu](http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu), enter keyword "torture." Select "academic pricing" -- \$3.45 for the (B) document, and download (don't order hard copy). You will need a credit card for this!

**Dec. 5, 11 pm:** Team Written Products Due 11 pm the Night Before the Presentations!!

**Session #13 (Dec. 6): Team presentations!**

**Tuesday, Nov. 29<sup>th</sup> or Dec. 13<sup>th</sup>, Noon:** \*\* 4<sup>th</sup> and Final Review Due!!!

**Session #14 (Dec. 13) Organized Crime, Democracy & Human Rights**

Teresa P.R. Caldeira and James Holston, "Democracy and Violence in Brazil," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41,4 (Oct 1999), pp. 691-729.

Charles T. Call, "Democratization, War, and State-Building: Constructing the Rule of Law in El Salvador," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 35:4 (November 2003).

Steven S. Dudley, "Drug Trafficking Organizations in Central America: *Transportistas*, Mexican Cartels and *Maras*," Working Paper Series on Mexico-US Security Collaboration, (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center, May 2010), 27 pp.

[BROWSE for 15 minutes]: Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, "Report on Citizen Security and Human Rights," OEA/Ser.L/V/II. Doc. 57. December 2009. 115 pages.

GUEST SPEAKER: David Holiday, Open Society Institute, Specialist in criminal justice and anti-narcotics policy.

## SOURCES OF SUPPORT

If you experience difficulty in this course for any reason, please don't hesitate to consult with me. In addition to the resources of the department, a wide range of services is available to support you in your efforts to meet the course requirements.

**Academic Support Center** (x3360, MGC 243) offers study skills workshops, individual instruction, tutor referrals, and services for students with learning disabilities. Writing support is available in the ASC Writing Lab or in the Writing Center, Battelle 228.

**Counseling Center** (x3500, MGC 214) offers counseling and consultations regarding personal concerns, self-help information, and connections to off-campus mental health resources.

**Disability Support Services** (x3315, MGC 206) offers technical and practical support and assistance with accommodations for students with physical, medical, or psychological disabilities. If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please notify me in a timely manner with a letter from the Academic Support Center or Disability Support Services so that we can make arrangements to address your needs.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY CODE

All students must adhere to the Academic Integrity Code (<http://www.american.edu/provost/registrar/regulations/reg80.cfm>). As the code states, "By enrolling at American University and then each semester when registering for classes, students acknowledge their commitment to the Code. As members of the academic community, students must become familiar with their rights and their responsibilities. In each course, they are responsible for knowing the requirements and restrictions regarding research and writing, examinations of whatever kind, collaborative work, the use of study aids, the appropriateness of assistance, and other issues. Students are responsible for learning the conventions of documentation and acknowledgment of sources. American University expects students to complete all examinations, tests, papers, creative projects, and assignments of any kind according to the highest ethical standards, as set forth either explicitly or implicitly in this Code or by the direction of instructors."

## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

In the event of a declared pandemic (influenza or other communicable disease), American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence due to illness. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of a declared pandemic or other emergency, students should refer to the AU Web site ([www.prepared.american.edu](http://www.prepared.american.edu)) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean's office for course and school/college-specific information.