Course Description:
Human rights have transformed international politics, law, social movements and political culture over the past century. Human rights norms inform almost every social relationship. At the same time, societies have different rights cultures and there are limits to how far human rights can transform society. The course will examine the history, nature and function of human rights. Students will develop an appreciation for the way in which human rights are historically and culturally specific. This course will engage with controversial debates, while emphasizing comparative and interdisciplinary learning.

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Grading

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All assignments should be submitted on eClass and hardcopy to Tory 5-21
Late Assignment Policy: Assignments are not accepted electronically. Late assignments will be penalized by 5% per day (10% weekends) and the evaluation for late assignments will only consist of a final grade (no comments). None will be accepted after seven days, and students will be given a grade of ‘0’ for that assignment. Extensions will only be provided in exceptional circumstances (e.g., computer problems are not accepted).

Sick Policy: The University’s policy on sickness/absence prohibits professors from requiring notes from your doctor. If you are unable to complete an assignment due to illness, write a formal letter to the professor stating why you were unable to submit the assignment (you do not need to be specific – for instance, you can simply indicate that you were ill – and please keep the letter brief, only a few sentences). Attach the letter to the paper, and submit the paper to the professor. Your formal grade will be adjusted after the paper is evaluated. Papers submitted under this policy will be returned without written comments (only a letter grade).

University Policies:

Policy about course outlines can be found in Course Requirements, Evaluation Procedures and Grading of the University Calendar.

The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online www.governance.ualberta.ca) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.”

“Audio or video recording, digital or otherwise, of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Student or instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).”
Seminar Participation

No marks are allocated for only attending class. Four (4) missed classes will result in a failed Participation grade.

Participation marks are based on two factors: demonstrating an understanding of the assigned readings and participating consistently in class. A strong contribution to the class discussion involves demonstrating an understanding of some of the core themes in the weekly readings, and clearly articulating your thoughts to others.

This course places a heavy emphasis on participation in class. In order to receive a strong grade in participation, students must come to class and participate consistently in the discussion. It is essential that everyone feels comfortable debating the issues raised in class, responding to the work of others, and expressing their own personal views. When criticizing others, we need to remain respectful of each other’s diverse views, experiences and manners. In engaging with the past, in particular, we will eventually encounter language that is no longer acceptable. One of the primary goals of a seminar course is to understand why this is the case, instead of condemning the language out of hand. Everyone is responsible for being sensitive to the dynamics of the seminar and to the sensibilities of everyone present. Each participant will bring to the class difference academic, cultural and personal experiences alongside myriad work histories and styles. Developing listening skills and self-criticism are important aspects of academic scholarship; in order to fully develop these skills, we must each learn to accept negative (but constructive) feedback from others.

Seminar Leader

Developing discussion questions forces you to consider the issues from numerous points of view and to critically read the material. Questions should be broad and open-ended, rather than solicit a single response. Grades will be based on demonstrating an understanding of the readings and developing effective discussion questions that encourage discussion in class. A good discussion also links the various readings together under common themes instead of discussing each reading separately. To help prepare your discussion questions, consider first these basic issues: What is the thesis of each chapter/article? How does the author prove her/his thesis? What are the broader issues/themes for the readings as a whole for this week? How do the readings for this week relate to previous weeks? How do the readings link to the course themes?

Seminar leaders must submit 10 discussion questions based on the readings for that week. Leading a discussion is a useful exercise in examining debates from a variety of perspectives. Seminar leaders are expected to have carefully examined the
readings for that week and attend class with questions that stimulate discussion. Leaders can introduce their topic but should not lecture the class. A good leader draws out the issues through group discussion, not by lecturing the group.

*I strongly encourage all seminar leaders to meet with me in the week preceding class to discuss draft questions and technique.*

Seminar Leader Tips:

* A common mistake among seminar leaders is drafting questions as they read the article or book. Too often, this results in narrow questions that simply address a single point in the reading. First, complete the reading. Secondly, draft discussion questions that address broad themes and issues.

- Carefully review the readings for that week. Have a strong grasp of the readings.

- Ask open-ended questions. Avoid questions that depend on specific answers or narrow points within the readings. For instance, questions such as "What do you think about the article?" or "What are the key issues?" are open-ended questions. Avoid questions such as "What did the author say about this point in the article?"

- Begin class with a broad question such as "What do you think of reading?"

- Avoid long, convoluted questions. Be direct. Sometimes, it helps to read quotes from book. Avoid referencing issues/topics from outside the readings unless you are confident it is general knowledge.

- Do not lecture the class. You can speak briefly to the issue, and you can offer your own view, but your primary goal is to facilitate the discussion.

- Avoid answering your own questions. Prepare variations on how to approach the issue/theme, such as rewording the same question. A common mistake among seminar leaders is to answer the question themselves if there is no immediate response from the group. Try repeating the question and, if there are still no responses, move on to a new question.

- Some questions will generate a great deal of discussion. Others much less. Do not hesitate to move on to a new question if your first question does not solicit a strong response.

- Give people time to answer. Don't follow-up too quickly. Don't be concerned with silence. Some people count to 10 in their heads.
Course Outline

The books assigned in this course are available from Amazon, the publisher, the bookstore or on reserve in Rutherford Library. Some of the books are also available for purchase as an e-book.

Week 1 (7 September): Introduction

Follow my postings on Twitter or Facebook. I will share current news relating to human rights and social movements:

Twitter @ HistoryOfRights

Facebook: HistoryOfRights

Week 2 (14 September): The Politics of Human Rights


Week 3 (21 September): The History of Human Rights

No class. Review the lecture audio file on the history of human rights in Canada posted on eClass on 22 September.

Week 4 (28 September): The Philosophy of Rights

Week 5 (5 October): The Sociology of Rights


Week 6 (12 October): The Law of Human Rights


Week 7 (19 October): Human Rights and Social Change


Week 8 (26 October): Term Paper Proposal or Book Review submission

No class.

Research proposals or book reviews to be submitted on eClass.
Week 9 (2 November): Human Rights Activism


Week 10 (9 November)

Reading Break. No class.

Week 11 (16 November): Human Rights and Culture


Week 12 (23 November): Rights Inflation?

Draft Papers due on eClass and Tory 5-21 on Friday, 25 November

Dominique Clément. Rights Inflation and the Crisis of Canada’s Rights Culture (WLU Press, under review). Download the manuscript from eClass.

Some of the previous course readings are especially relevant to this week’s discussion, including Henry Shue, Amalia Lucia Cabezas, and Amy Guttmann’s introduction to the Ignatieff book.

Week 13 (30 November)

No class.

The readings assigned for this week are your colleagues’ submissions. Review the other papers, and be prepared to provide constructive feedback next week.

Week 14 (7 December): Term Paper or Review Presentation

Prepare a 5-minute presentation summarizing the key findings of your research paper or book review. The class will provide feedback to revise the paper/review for submission.

Term Paper or Second Book Review Due December 14
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Assignments

Reading list file on eClass: This reading list will assist in identifying sources and topics for a research paper.

Book Review

Choose a journal that publishes book reviews. Follow the journal’s submission guidelines. Book reviews do not include a bibliography, citations or title page (however, please include the target journal in the citation at the top of the page). Use Cambria 12 font, double-spaced. Reviews should be no longer than 1200 words. The second review should build upon the feedback provided in the first review, particularly writing and style.

For the first review, use Mary-Ann Waldron's *Free to Believe: Rethinking Freedom of Conscience and Religion in Canada*. For the second review, choose a book that has been published in the past two years. Ideally, the book will link to your research interests but also fall within the scope of the course themes. Alternatively, consult with the professor for suggestions on choosing a book for review. Submit the citation information for the second book review on the same day that you submit the first book review.

Research Paper

The paper should include a bibliography, citations, title page and page numbers. Use Cambria 12 font, double-spaced. The term paper should be approximately 6000-8000 words.

See below for a list of term paper topics. However, students are encouraged to propose a topic that more closely reflects their thesis research. Please confirm the topic with the professor before the proposal deadline if not choosing from the list below. It is essential that your paper examine the topic within the framework of the course. In other words, the paper should be a genuine study of human rights rather than simply a human rights issue. For instance, a paper on physician-assisted suicide should consider the issue within a human rights framework. The course readings will be a useful resource in developing the analysis for this paper.

*Research Paper Proposal*: The proposal should be submitted on eClass. The proposal should include a summary (350 words maximum) of the topic and the key issues that you will explore in the paper. The proposal should include a list of six to ten books/articles that you have identified at this stage.
1. Should hate speech be criminalized or is it free speech?

2. Are human rights a legitimate justification for military intervention?

3. Are minority rights inconsistent with Canada’s liberal rights culture?

4. Is there a human right to die?
   b. Ask the professor for a copy of this article as well as newspapers clippings on this topic: Juliana Ho. “Is Doctor-Assisted Suicide Constitutional?” The Constitution 7 July 2015. 3pgs.

5. Are human rights culturally relative?