

**SOCIOLOGY 302 SEMINAR: ADVANCED TOPICS IN HUMAN RIGHTS
PROFESSOR THOMAS CUSHMAN, WELLESLEY COLLEGE
FALL 2007**

OFFICE: PENDLETON EAST 334

OFFICE HOURS: Monday, 12-2:00, Thursday, 1-2:00 (and by appt.)

This seminar focuses on central human rights problems and issues in contemporary global society. Our focus is primarily to understand these problems in a sociological frame of reference. The seminar is topical and focuses on some of the more visible issues in the field of human rights:: the rise of the humanitarian impulse, modern day humanitarianism, genocide and genocide prevention, slavery in modernity, sex and organ trafficking, and poverty as a human rights issue. In addition to reading deeply in these areas, students will prepare a 20-25 page term paper on a topic of their choice and work in close consultation with the professor throughout the semester.

Course Texts:

Below are the main texts for the class. These are required and close readings are necessary, so they should be purchased at the bookstore.

Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*. Picador, 2004

Adam Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free the Empire's Slaves* Mariner Books, 2006

Kevin Bales, *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy*, University of California Press, 2000

Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America in the Age of Genocide*, Harper, 2003

Kathryn Farr, *Sex Trafficking: The Global Market in Women and Children*, Worth, 2004

Paul Farmer, *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*, University of California Press, 2004)

Susan D. Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death*

Class Requirements

Since this is an intensive seminar, class attendance and participation is required. If you miss more than three classes for any reason, you will be asked to withdraw from the class and this will be strictly enforced. Each week, each student will generate two questions based on the class readings for that week for general class discussions. These should be written and brought to class. Attendance and participation is worth 30 percent of your grade. There will be two short papers of 5-7 pages each worth 15 percent of your grade. Due dates: for the first paper, October 15, for the second paper, December 3. 40% of your grade will be based on a 20-25 page research paper, which will be the central focus of your outside work in the seminar and due on the last day of final examination period. A basic outline (with annotated bibliography) will be due on October 29. It is expected that each student will work closely with the professor to produce an excellent piece of independent research and students are advised to begin thinking about a topic as soon as possible.

Course Schedule

September 10 : Introduction to the Course: The Structure of Global Human Rights, Problems, and Responses to Human Suffering

Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*

September 17: Social Suffering and the Problem of Representation

Read: Arthur Koestler, "On Disbelieving Atrocities" , can be found at <http://www.freerepublic.com/forum/a397927dc7061.htm>
Arthur Kleinman and Joan Kleinman, "The Appeal of Experience; The Dismay of Images: Cultural Appropriations of Suffering in Our Times;" David B. Morris, "About Suffering: Voice, Genre, and Moral Community"; and Lawrence L. Langer, "The Alarmed Vision: Social Suffering and Holocaust Atrocity" all from *Social Suffering*, eds. Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das, Margaret Lock (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1997), all on e-reserve.

September 24 : The Rise of Humanitarianism

Read: Adam Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free the Empire's Slaves* *Mariner Books*
Thomas Cushman, review of David Martin, *Does Christianity Cause War?* (e-reserve)

October 1: Modern Humanitarianism

Read:

Thomas Weiss, "Principles, Politics, and Humanitarian Action," at:

http://hwproject.tufts.edu/publications/electronic/e_ppaha.html

Carol Bergman, ed. *Another Day in Paradise: International Humanitarian Workers Tell Their Stories* (in entirety)

October 8 – No class, fall break

First Essay due October 15 in class

October 15: Global Slavery in Modernity

Read: Kevin Bales, *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy* (in entirety)

October 22: Global Sex Trafficking

Read: Kathryn Farr, *Sex Trafficking: The Global Market in Women and Children* (in entirety)

Two-Three Page Outline of Term Paper, with Annotated Bibliography, due October 29 (please note: it is expected that all students in the seminar meet with the instructor to discuss topics, resources, and strategies during office hours. A special sign-up sheet will be provided)

October 29, Nov. 12, Nov. 19 Genocide in the Modern World

Read: Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America in the Age of Genocide*

Thomas Cushman, "Is Genocide Preventable: Some Theoretical Considerations"? (e-reserve)

November 26: Poverty and Health Care as Human Rights Issues

Read: Peter Singer, reading TBA

Paul Farmer, *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor* (in entirety) Note: small groups of students will present material about the various cases in the book)

Second Essay Due, December 3

December 3-10 : Indifference as a Human Rights Problem

Read: Lewis Coser, "Distance from Evil" (e-reserve)

Suan Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death* (in entirety)