

SOCIOLOGY 302 SEMINAR: ADVANCED TOPICS IN HUMAN RIGHTS

PROFESSOR THOMAS CUSHMAN, WELLESLEY COLLEGE

SPRING, 2007

OFFICE: PENDLETON EAST 334

OFFICE HOURS: M 4-6, TH 11-12, or 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.

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

Carol Bergman, ed. *Another Day in Paradise: International Humanitarian Workers Tell Their Stories*, Orbis Books, 2003)

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)

There are also a number of reserve readings on e-reserve that are required, these are noted in the plan of the class below

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. Most weeks (but not all), each student will be asked to focus on some aspect of the topic for that week and be able to present some facts about cases for discussion in class (for instance, when we look at sex trafficking, each student would be asked to do a little background research on a country or region, write up a brief report and present to the class if called upon. In addition, each student will generate two questions based on the class readings for that week for general class discussions.

Attendance and participation is worth 30 percent of your grade. There will be two short position papers of 5-7 pages each worth 15 percent of your grade. Due dates: for the first paper, February 26, second paper, April 23. Forty percent 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. A précis and basic outline (with annotated bibliography) will be due on Friday, March 16. 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

January 29: Introduction to the Course: The Structure of Global Human Rights Problems and Responses to Human Suffering

February 5: 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.

February 12: 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)

February 19: No Class President's Day

February 26: 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)

March 5: Global Slavery in Modernity

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

March 12: Global Sex Trafficking

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

Spring Break, March 17-March 25

March 26-April 9: Genocide in the Modern World

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

Thomas Cushman, "Is Genocide Preventable"? (Additionally, I may provide you with a work in progress on my most recent thinking on this topic)

(We will be spending three class periods on genocide, a plan for reading Power's book and supplemental information on cases of genocide in 20th century will be provided)

April 16, No class, Patriots' Day

April 17 Monday Schedule: Social and Economic Rights

Readings on social and economic rights, TBA

April 23-30: Poverty and Health Care as Human Rights Issues

Read, Peter Singer, readings TBA

Paul Farmer, *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor* (in entirety)

May 7: Indifference as a Human Rights Problem

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

Excerpts from Michael Herzfeld, "The Social Production of Indifference" (e-reserve) and

Michael Barnett, "Eyewitness to a Genocide" (e-reserve)