

SOCIOLOGY 302 SEMINAR: ADVANCED TOPICS IN HUMAN RIGHTS
PROFESSOR THOMAS CUSHMAN, WELLESLEY COLLEGE
FALL 2014
OFFICE: PENDLETON EAST 334
OFFICE HOURS: Tuesday, 9:40-12:30 and by appointment (in special cases)

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 problem of representation of suffering, the humanitarian impulse, modern day humanitarianism, genocide and genocide prevention, the components of human rights movements, sex trafficking, and poverty as a human rights issue. Students will prepare a 20-25 page term paper on a topic of their choice and work in close consultation with the professor on this research paper 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 or elsewhere.

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

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

Michael Ignatieff, *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry*, Princeton, 2003

Siddharta Kara, *Sex Trafficking: Inside the Business of Modern Slavery*, Columbia University Press, 2010

Peter Singer, *The Life You Can Save: How to Do Your Part to End World Poverty*, Random House, 2010.

Class Requirements

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 materials and analysis for presentation in class and this will be determined during seminar meetings. Assignments will be given to you on a week-to-week basis.; each week students will be asked to do some background research to add to the following

week's seminar. Attendance and participation is worth 30 percent of your grade. There will be two papers of 6-8 pages, each worth 15 percent of your grade. The first paper is due on March 18, the second paper on April 25. The final research paper will be 40% of your grade. A prospectus and outline with an annotated bibliography will be due on April 1. 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. Student presentations on research will comprise the last two meetings of the semester and you are expected to prepare and deliver a formal and professional presentation on your research paper topics.

Course Schedule

January 28: Introduction to the Course: The Structure of Global Human Rights, Problems, and Responses to Human Suffering

Read: Arthur Koestler, "On Disbelieving Atrocities" at <http://archive.is/0hXaJ>
Stephen Hopgood, "The End of Human Rights" at:
http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-end-of-human-rights/2014/01/03/7f8fa83c-6742-11e3-ae56-22de072140a2_story.html

February 4: Social Suffering and the Problem of Representation

Read: Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*
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 11: 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 18: The Modern Human Rights Movement

Read: Michael Ignatieff, *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry*

February 25: Modernity and Its Outcasts

Read: Zygmunt Bauman, *Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts* (in entirety)

March 4 : Global Sex Trafficking

Read: Siddhartha Kara, *Sex Trafficking: Inside the Business of Modern Slavery*

March 11: Sex Trafficking, continued

March 18: Genocide

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

Spring Break March 18-30: please do not skip class on the 18th!

April 1: Genocide (continued)

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

Two-Three Page Outline of Term Paper, with Annotated Bibliography, due April 1 in class (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

April 8 :

Poverty as a Human Rights Issue

Read: Peter Singer, *The Life You Can Save* (in entirety)
Peter Singer, "Outsiders: Our Obligations to Those Outside Our Borders"

April 15: The Future of Human Rights

Readings T.B.A.

April 29: Student presentations on research

Second Essay Due, April

**May 6:
Student
presentati**

ons on research

