

History of Human Rights

Spring 2024: HIST 33805
MWF 4:30-5:20pm in LWSN B151

Professor Klein-Pejšová (PAY-show-vah; she, hers)

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Student Meeting Hours: Fridays 10am-12pm (or by appointment) in-person or [on Zoom](#)

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Eleanor Roosevelt holding the Spanish-language version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Palais de Chaillot, Paris, December 1948.

The concept of – and struggle for – human rights is powerful, pervasive. Its origins, development, and strategies of implementation contested. Have human beings always had the "right to have rights"? How did the concept of "rights" arise? What does it mean, and how has it been used? This course explores human rights' geneology and uneven historical evolution from the European Enlightenment through the late twentieth century human rights revolution and experience of globalization. We will examine Atlantic Revolutionary era articulations of “rights of man” and “human rights,” the interwar institutionalization of rights, the post-WWII shift from minority to individual human rights, the human rights revolution of the late 1970s, and the relationship between globalization and human rights using a variety of primary and secondary sources, with special attention to relations between human rights and mass atrocity prevention. This course fulfills a core requirement for the Human Rights minor.

Required Texts:

- Peter N. Stearns, *Human Rights in World History 2nd edition* (Routledge, 2023): **eBook link** <https://www.routledge.com/Human-Rights-in-World-History/Stearns/p/book/9781032332109>
- Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights* (Norton, 2007)
- Scott Straus, *Fundamentals of Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention*: **free pdf download; or \$2.99 Kindle version** <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/reports-and-resources/fundamentals-of-genocide-and-mass-atrocity-prevention> & free author's note: https://vault.ushmm.org/adaptivemedia/rendition/id_d510a06af584317ea70d4e43369a7c463ee9fc78
- **Additional required readings available on Brightspace, marked with a “B” (B).**

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course, you will have:

- 1) Gained a deeper understanding of the patterns and processes, ruptures and continuities in the human rights history narrative which have shaped today's world, its politics, ideas, and ambitions;
- 2) Explored how human rights connects us to other people, places, and times;
- 3) Used primary source evidence to analyze fundamental problems in human rights history in individual writing and in group work;
- 4) Engaged in an environment of open inquiry to exchange ideas and interpretations of human rights concepts;
- 5) Become better prepared to negotiate the variable applications of human rights concepts in today's globalized world.

Course Requirements and Grading: 400 possible points

- I) **Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory following Purdue guidelines. Arrive on time. If there is a reason that you must leave early, notify me before class begins and sit near an exit. Be courteous. Be present. More than 3 unexcused absences will result in 1/3 of a letter grade penalty. We will be using iClicker for taking attendance.
iClicker join code: <https://join.iclicker.com/BUAF>

- II) **Participation (40 Cumulative points):** *40 points = full participation credit (100%). Additional points accrue as extra credit. Points updated weekly on Brightspace.
Motto: *The better we each do, the better we all do.*
 - We will continuously be using Google docs and slides for active and collaborative learning. Let us be generous and respectful of each other as we engage with the materials, ideas, and range of opinions we will encounter.
 - You receive 1 point for each adequate response in the docs, 2 points for more detailed, thoughtful, and analytical responses. Write your first name and last initial in brackets at the end of your response for credit, ex/ [Rebekah K-P]. You will receive 0 points for 0 response. You may contribute more than one response in a doc. You may also comment on the responses of your classmates for credit. This method creates a set of collaborative class notes from the readings and discussions that are saved into your google drive and will help you prepare for exams and retain course content. Editing permissions will be open for each week's docs for one week. I will explain further in class.

- III) **Four Reaction Papers (RPs) (25 pts. each, 100 points total):** These are concise (about 300 words – about 1 page) problem-driven responses to the RP question based on the week's readings, which you will find listed on the syllabus under the relevant Friday entry. **RPs are due on Brightspace by 3pm on the indicated Fridays.**

- IV) **Prevention Policy Project (200 points: 100 = annotated bibliography, 100 = policy paper):** This project is intended to connect your examination of human rights instruments and institutions established in the postwar period and in the 1990s with mass atrocity prevention. You will be randomly assigned **1** of the following **8** case studies to examine, each of which represents developments in how the international

community has confronted mass atrocities: Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda, Kosovo, East Timor, Libya, Sudan, and Syria. There are other cases, to be sure, but these help us in understanding the precedents the international community draws on for current policy making. I will give more details in class.

Part I) (100 points): You will create an **annotated bibliography** of **at least 5** sources (books, NGO reports, peer reviewed articles) about your case study, including 1 first person perspective memoir or testimony. You will write a 2-page (500-word) introductory overview of your project bibliography. You **may not** use the Straus book (*Fundamentals of Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention*) as one of the sources for the bibliography, but you will use it to think through your policy paper. **Due on Brightspace by 9pm on Friday, April 5th.**

Part II) (100 points): You will write a 3-page (750-word) **policy paper** about your case study. The paper will address the following questions: To what extent were the prevention policies employed by the international community effective? What variables/risk factors did the policies address? What policy conclusions do you draw from this case? What policy recommendations would you propose moving forward (downstream prevention)? **Due on Brightspace by 9pm on Friday, April 19th.**

- V) **Exit Essay: (60 points):** What is one thing you have learned this semester? Write this 1-page (300-word) essay as if you were sitting down over coffee explaining a topic, theme, or idea that clicked with you during the semester. What about it made you sit up and take notice? **Due on Brightspace by 3pm on Monday, April 22nd.**

Grade scale: A+ = 98-100; A = 93-97; A- = 90-92; B+ = 88-89; B = 83-87; B- = 80-82; C+ = 78-79; C = 73-77; C- = 70-72; D+ = 68-69; D = 63-67; D- = 60-62; F = 0-59

Schedule of Classes (You will learn of changes to the schedule in advance):

- Week 1: **What are Human Rights? What is Human Rights History?**
 M, 1/8: Course introduction & course logistics → What do human rights mean to you?
 W, 1/10: Stearns, ch.2, “Challenges in Framing Human Rights History,” pp. 6-27.
 F, 1/12: Hoffmann, “Genealogies of Human Rights,” pp. 1-26. **(B)**
 • How does Hoffmann explain human rights genealogies? We will discuss how he traces the progression through “Rights, Nations, and Empires since 1800,” and “Competing Universalisms since 1945” in groups.
- Week 2: **Rights & Responsibilities**
 M, 1/15: *MLK Day – No Class*
 W, 1/17: Sikkink, ch.1, “What Together We Can Do,” pp. 1-25. **(B)**
 F, 1/19: Donnelly & Whelan, ch.1, “Human Rights in Global Politics: Historical Perspective,” pp. 3-19. **(B)**
(RP #1) “What explains the change in human rights norms and practices over time?” The authors offer 3 possible explanations on page 17: changing moral sensibilities, changes in the character of international

relations, changes in national human rights practices. With which explanation are you most likely to agree? Why?

- Week 3: **Premodern Traditions: Legal, Philosophical, Religious**
 M, 1/22: Legal: Stearns, ch.3, "Regional Traditions before Human Rights," pp. 28-37.
 W, 1/24: Phil: Stearns, ch.3, "Regional Traditions before Human Rights," pp. 37-43.
 F, 1/26: Rel: Stearns, ch.3, "Regional Traditions before Human Rights," pp. 43-61 for group work, including the "premodern legacy" section of the chapter.
- Week 4: **The Rights of Man – What Changes?**
 M, 1/29: Concepts: Stearns, ch.4, "The Push for New Rights," pp. 63-78.
 • *4th week voluntary, ungraded check-in: what's going well, not well, etc.*
 W, 1/31: Application: Stearns, ch.4, "The Push for New Rights," pp. 78-95.
 F, 2/2: Jews as Test Case: "Jews Through Jewish and Non-Jewish Eyes," from ch.10 in Efron, et al, *The Jews: A History* 2nd edition, pp. 268-272; and see map of Jewish Emancipation in Europe. **(B)**
(RP #2) What do you think about the arguments presented in the European debates about whether Jews should gain civic equality and be admitted to citizenship? How did this debate represent a change in human rights norms and practices?
- Week 5: **"We hold these truths to be self-evident."**
 M, 2/5: Hunt, "Introduction," pp. 16-34: consider terms and phrasing, their meaning and usage: "universal", "self-evident", "natural", "equal", "rights", "torture", "the Creator."
 W, 2/7: Hunt, ch.1, "Torrents of Emotion," pp. 35-69.
 F, 2/9: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "The Social Contract" (1762) **(B)**
- Week 6: **Trajectories**
 M, 2/12: Hunt, ch.2, "Bone of Their Bone," pp. 70-112.
 • How did Eighteenth-century readers learn to empathize "across more broadly defined boundaries"? To what extent do you find Hunt's argument convincing?
 W, 2/14: Hunt, ch.3, "They Have Set a Great Example," pp. 113-145.
 • Why do declarations serve as milestones, and evidence of attitude transformation, according to Hunt? In what ways?
 F, 2/16: Hunt, ch.4, "There Will Be No End of It," pp. 146-175.
(RP #3) What does Hunt mean when she cites the quotation "there will be no end of it?" How does this sentiment relate to the cascading rights demands argument? Do you agree that "there will be no end to it?"
- Week 7: **19th Century Advances and Retreats**
 M, 2/19: Stearns, ch.5, "Human Rights on a World Stage," pp. 96-117.
 W, 2/21: Stearns, ch.5, "Human Rights on a World Stage," pp. 117-124.
 F, 2/23: Hunt, ch.5, "The Soft Power of Humanity," pp. 176-200.

- Week 8: **Interwar Institutionalization of Rights**
 M, 2/26: Stearns, ch.6, “Human Rights between the World Wars,” pp. 125-136.
 W, 2/28: Mark Mazower, ch.2, pp. 41-75 in “Empires, Nations, Minorities,” in *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century*. (B)
 F, 3/1: The Polish Minorities Treaties. (B)
- Week 9: **Postwar**
 M, 3/4: Deák, ch.10, “Purging Hitler’s Europe,” pp. 191-209 in *Europe on Trial*. (B)
 • *discussion of Prevention Policy Project.*
 W, 3/6: Waller, ch.1, pp. 3-40 “A Crime without a Name,” in *Confronting Evil*. (B)
 F, 3/8: Crimes Against Humanity: Marrus, pp. 51-60 in *The Nuremberg War Crimes Trial, 1945-46*. (B)
 (RP #4) How did the Allied powers justify the introduction of the new “crimes against humanity” charge at the Nuremberg Trials? Do you agree that this charge was a necessary precedent?
- Week 10: **Spring Break 3/11-3/16**
- Week 11: **Regime of Rights**
 M, 3/18: Ishay, ch.4, “After World War II: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” pp. 211-225. (B)
 W, 3/20: Stearns, ch.7, “The Global Expansion of Human Rights,” pp. 137-149.
 F, 3/22: Cohen, ch.2, “The ‘Human Rights Revolution’ at Work: Displaced Persons in Postwar Europe,” pp. 45-61. (B)
- Week 12: **Internationalization of Rights**
 M, 3/25: Stearns, ch.7, “The Global Expansion of Human Rights,” pp. 149-161.
 W, 3/27: Moyn, Intro: *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World*, pp. 1-10. (B)
 F, 3/29: Black, ch.6, “Are Women ‘Human’? The UN and the Struggle to Recognize Women’s Rights as Human Rights,” pp.133-155. (B)
- Week 13: **Geographies of Rights**
 M, 4/1: Stearns, ch.7, “The Global Expansion of Human Rights,” pp. 161-176.
 W, 4/3: Donnelly & Whelan, ch.11, “Globalization, the State, and Human Rights,” pp. 201-215.
 F, 4/5: Discussion: Human Rights and the State: see question 2 page 213-214 in Donnelly & Whelan, “Human rights advocates typically focus on states as a threat to human rights. This chapter suggests that globalization is forcing human rights advocates to emphasize the role of the state as protector. Has there really been a change? Has not the role of the state as protector always been central?”
 •*Annotated Bibliography due on Brightspace today by 9pm.*
- Week 14: **Prevention and Humanitarian Intervention**
 M, 4/8: Straus, ch.5, “An Emerging Policy Framework on Atrocity Prevention.”
 W, 4/10: Straus, ch. 6, “Tools and Approaches.”
 F, 4/12: Straus, ch.7, “Successes, Risks, and Unknowns.”

- Week 15: **Thinking Forward**
 M, 4/15: Stearns, ch.8, "Resistance and Response," pp. 177-202.
 4/16 *Waller Event, more info TBA*
 W, 4/17: Kathryn Sikkink, ch.1, "Introduction," pp. 1-28 of *The Justice Cascade: How Human Rights Prosecutions are Changing World Politics. (B)*
 F, 4/19: **•Policy Paper due on Brightspace today by 9pm - no class**
- Week 16: **Reading Week**
 M, 4/22: Wrap-Up Discussion today.
•Exit Essay due on Brightspace today by 3pm.
 W, 4/24 & F, 4/26: **no class**

Have a Great Summer!

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

DISCLAIMER

In the event of a major campus emergency, the above requirements, deadlines and grading policies are subject to changes that may be required by a revised semester calendar. Any such changes in this course will be posted on Brightspace once the course resumes or can be obtained by contacting the professor via email.

EMAIL ETIQUETTE

Outside of class or office hours, communicate with your professor by email. State the reason for your email in the subject line (ex: "question about essay"). Include a full salutation (ex: "Dear Professor") and closing with your full name (ex: "Sincerely, Eleanor Roosevelt"). Use full sentences, correct grammar, and punctuation. If you fail to follow this etiquette, I will not respond to your email. I will usually respond to your emails within 24 hours, except for weekends.

CHEATING / PLAGIARISM/ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Plagiarism refers to the reproduction of another's words or ideas without proper attribution. University Regulations contain further information on dishonesty. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious offenses and will be treated as such in this class. **You are expected to produce your own work and to accurately cite all necessary materials.** Cheating, plagiarism, and other dishonest practices will be punished as harshly as Purdue University policies allow. Any instances of academic dishonesty will likely result in a grade of F for the course and notification of the Dean of Students Office. Please make sure that you are familiar with Purdue's academic integrity policies:

<https://www.purdue.edu/odos/osrr/academic-integrity/undergraduate.html>

GRIEF ABSENCE POLICY

Purdue University recognizes that a time of bereavement is very difficult for a student. The University therefore provides the following rights to students facing the loss of a family member through the Grief Absence Policy for Students (GAPS). Students will be excused from classes

for funeral leave and given the opportunity to complete missed assignments or assessments in the event of the death of a member of the student's family.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Purdue University is committed to providing equal access and equal opportunity to university courses, activities, and programs for students with disabilities. Students with documented disabilities that substantially limit a major life activity, such as learning, walking, or seeing, may qualify for academic adjustments and/or services. If you have a disability that requires special academic accommodation, please make an appointment to speak with me within the first three weeks of the semester in order to discuss any adjustments. It is the student's responsibility to notify the Disability Resource Center of any impairment/condition that may require accommodations and/or classroom modifications. To request information about academic adjustments, auxiliary aids, or services, please contact the Disability Resource Center in the Office of the Dean of Students, 830 Young Hall, (765) 494-1247 (V/TTY), drc@purdue.edu.

NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY STATEMENT

Purdue University is committed to maintaining a community which recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among its members; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. In pursuit of its goal of academic excellence, the University seeks to develop and nurture diversity. The University believes that diversity among its many members strengthens the institution, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and enriches campus life.

Purdue University prohibits discrimination against any member of the University community on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, disability, or status as a veteran. The University will conduct its programs, services and activities consistent with applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and orders and in conformance with the procedures and limitations as set forth in Executive Memorandum No. D-1, which provides specific contractual rights and remedies.

VIOLENT BEHAVIOR POLICY

Purdue University is committed to providing a safe and secure campus environment. Purdue strives to create an educational environment for students and work environment for employees that promote educational and career goals. Violent behavior impedes such goals. Therefore, violent behavior is prohibited in or on any university facility or while participating in any university activity.