

ANTH 282-10

Summer 2018

## Anthropology of/and Human Rights



Monday-Thursdays  
June 4 - July 6, 2018

1:00 - 3:00 PM

Room: TBA

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This course explores the history, construction, and practice of human rights from an anthropological perspective. While anthropology is committed to exploring the diversity of human experience ethnographically through local frames of meaning, United Nations bodies and international humanitarian law and human rights conventions have historically emphasized universal norms that transcend cultural differences and local particularities. To what extent can these two perspectives be reconciled? What can anthropology tell us about the potential and limitations of the human rights discourses? How are conceptions of individual and collective rights constructed in contemporary political contexts? Can anthropology help us rethink our conception of what it is to be human? What it means to have rights? How can anthropology help us trace the cultural underpinnings and trajectories of genocide and torture? How do anthropologists grapple with the ethical questions implicit in doing research in settings where human rights violations have impacted the communities they are studying, and where dangers might still be present? Should anthropologists be advocates as

well as analysts? Witnesses as well as researchers? We will focus in depth on two issues in this course: Anthropological interpretations of genocide and the current immigration debate in the United States.

**By the end of the session you will be able to:**

- ❖ Identify the cultural, political, and historical bases of contemporary (post-WWII) conceptions of human rights.
- ❖ Rethink the meanings of “universal” and “relative” in human rights discourses and practices.
- ❖ Think critically and comparatively about the various cultural meanings of equality, difference, justice, accountability, and conflict resolution.
- ❖ Gain an understanding of the international legal machinery of human rights protection and humanitarian intervention.
- ❖ Question the idea of “natural law.”
- ❖ Apply an anthropological frame of analysis to new, emerging human rights issues in a globalizing world.
- ❖ Examine the ethical challenges of anthropological field research on human rights.
- ❖ Turn a critical eye on anthropology to understand how knowledge is formed and what its ethical and political stakes are.

**REQUIRED TEXTS (in alphabetical order)**

DeLeon, Jason. 2015. *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. University of California Press.

Rosenblatt, Adam. 2015. *Digging for the Disappeared: Forensic Science after Atrocity*. Stanford University Press.

Terrio, Susan. 2015. *Whose Child am I? Unaccompanied, Undocumented Children in U.S. Immigration Custody*. University of California Press.

**KEY DOCUMENTS ONLINE**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

International Covenant on Social, Economic, and Cultural Rights

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cescr.htm>

Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam

<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/cairodeclaration.html>

Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People

<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/declra.htm>

UN High Commissioner on Human Rights: Report on Rights of LGBT  
Individuals

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/12/20/united-nations-landmark-report-high-commissioner-human-rights-discriminatory-laws-an>

American Anthropological Association Committee for Human Rights

<http://www.aaanet.org/committees/cfhr/index.htm/>

*All books will be on reserve in the Lauinger Library.  
Readings and videos will be available on BlackBoard.*

#### **GRADING:**

Two 1000-word papers:	40%
In-class presentation of an assigned reading:	15%
Comments on two presentations:	10%
Op Ed essay	15%
Attendance and participation:	20%

#### **ABOUT THE ASSIGNMENTS:**

**Reaction papers:** One week before each is due, I will give you three prompts. You will choose *one* to answer. This assignment will require you to analyze, compare, critique, and explore course concepts and readings.

**In-class presentation of readings:** In order to streamline and facilitate the reading of texts during this five-week session, each student will present a chapter from each of the course texts. *This does not mean that you are not responsible for all the readings.* Every Friday, these presentations will be posted to BlackBoard. This will create a shared “encyclopedia” of course readings. You will be expected to comment on *two* of these presentations by the end of the semester.

**Op Ed essay:** Choose a human rights topic that is in the news. Write an Op Ed column, from an anthropological perspective, about this issue. (800 words.) [Assignment details will be provided in class.]

**Course expectations:** The success of the course -- and your individual success in the class -- requires regular attendance, participation, and preparation. Each class session is roughly equivalent to one week during the regular semester schedule. Students are expected to come to class having done the assigned readings for the day and to be prepared to engage actively in discussion about those readings and their connection to broader themes in the class. Discussions will form a crucial part of the class, and be a central space for your learning. You should bring your copy of the day's reading to each class.

**Course policy on electronics:** Your active presence and participation in our discussions is crucial to its success - and to your personal success in the class. You may use a laptop *only* to take notes or consult PDF versions of the readings. *No one should be online or using their smart phones during class sessions.*

## COURSE SCHEDULE

**WEEK ONE:** *What is a "right"? What is a human? Where do rights come from? Who has rights? How do people gain and lose rights? Does Anthropology have any special contributions to make towards the understanding of human rights?*

Monday June 4th:

- ❖ Introductions and Radio Lab Audio: "Lucy the Chimp" -- What are the boundaries and characteristics of "the human"?  
<http://www.radiolab.org/2010/feb/19/>

Tuesday June 5:

- ❖ Selected chapters from Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*.

Wednesday June 6:

- ❖ Key Declarations and the Question of Universality
  - US Declaration of Independence (on Blackboard)
  - French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (on Blackboard)
  - Universal Declaration of Human Rights  
<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

- Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam  
<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instate/cairodeclaration.html>
- Declarations on Anthropology and Human Rights, Committee for Human Rights of the American Anthropological Association (1947 and 1999)  
<http://www.aaanet.org/committees/cfhr/index.htm/>

Thursday, June 7:

- ❖ Dembour, “Four Schools of Human Rights.”
- ❖ Messer, Ellen. “Anthropology and Human Rights.”

**WEEK TWO: *Cultures of Rights and the Anthropological Approach: Genocide.***

Monday June 11:

- ❖ Goodale, M. “Anthropology and human rights in a new key”
- ❖ Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. “The Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropology.”

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, June 12, 13, and 14:

- ❖ Rosenblatt, Adam. *Digging for the Disappeared: Forensic Science after Atrocity* (Entire)

**FIRST REACTION ESSAY DUE JUNE 19th**

**WEEK THREE: Genocide, cont., and Crossing Borders: The Human Rights of Labor Migrants and Refugees from an Anthropological Perspective Pt. 1**

Monday, June 18:

- ❖ Film: “The Triumph of Evil”
- ❖ Barnett, Michael. “The UN Security Council, Indifference, and Genocide in Rwanda.”

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, June 19, 20 and 21:

DeLeon, Jason. *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail* (entire).

**WEEK FOUR: *Crossing Borders: The Human Rights of Labor Migrants and Refugees from an Anthropological Perspective Pt. 2***

Monday, June 25:

- ❖ Green, Linda. "Fear as a Way of Life."
- ❖ Bourgois, Phillipe "Confronting Anthropological Ethics: Ethnographic Lessons from Central America."

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, June 26-28:

- ❖ Terrio, Susan. *Whose Child am I? Unaccompanied, Undocumented Children in U.S. Immigration Custody*. University of California Press. (Entire.)

**WEEK FIVE: *Human Rights in Action: Focus on Middle Eastern Cultures in National and International Legal Frameworks***

Monday, July 2:

Film, *El Norte*

Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, June 3, 5, and 6 \*

- ❖ King-Irani, Laurie. "To Reconcile, or to Be Reconciled."
- ❖ Borneman, John. *The Case of Ariel Sharon and the Fate of Universal Jurisdiction* Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies Monograph Series. (Selected chapters will be available on Blackboard.)

\* Note that, because we have Wednesday, July 4<sup>th</sup> off for Independence Day, our last week ends on Friday, not Thursday.

**SECOND REACTION PAPER and  
OP ED ESSAY DUE ON JULY 9th**