

Topics in 19th Century U.S. History:

HUMAN RIGHTS AT HOME AND ABROAD

History 723
TH 3:30-6:20
MHRA 3204
Fall 2017

Dr. Mark Elliott
Office: MHRA 2125
Office Hours:
T 2:00-4:00

DESCRIPTION:

This course examines the emerging historical literature on "human rights" and explores its emergence as cultural and political forces in both an American and an international context during the long 19th century. The United States, as a nation, was born during an age of international revolution in which radicals asserted universal rights and liberties "for all mankind." In the same era, a "humanitarian" sensibility that sought to lessen human suffering in the world began to emerge in Euro-American institutions and social thought. This course will trace the development and influence of both secular and religious concepts of "humanity" and the belief in universal "human rights" from the Revolutionary Era through the First World War. Prior to the Civil War, the debates about universal human rights were connected primarily to the movement to abolish slavery in the British Empire and the United States, and women's rights. After the abolition of slavery, organizations and individuals devoted to "humane" causes or adopting a "human rights" discourse began to proliferate across a broad spectrum of reform movements. One of the tasks of this course will be to evaluate these various movements and causes and assess their commitment to human rights. How did a commitment to human rights coexist with other beliefs and commitments? Ideas about race, gender, nationalism, moral and material progress, evolution, and other important social beliefs will be analyzed and their impact on the human rights discourses will be assessed.

Each class meeting is organized around the discussion of either one book and one short reading, or several articles/book chapters, as the main reading for the week. Each of the readings been carefully chosen to represent important issues or the latest scholarship on topics related to human rights or humanitarianism. Sometimes, students will read primary sources. For each main reading, students must be able to identify its thesis, to critically evaluate its logic and methodology, and to assess its historiographic importance. Students will share book reviews and summaries with each other and work collectively to broaden their base of knowledge.

GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Reading secondary sources efficiently, identifying main arguments, and critically evaluating methodologies
- Reading primary sources analytically, being able to tease out and interpret the meanings both stated and implied while understanding them in their historical context.

--Participating in sophisticated academic debates and exchanges while maintaining the requisite civility and respect for one's colleagues.

--Delivering informative and useful oral presentations to peers.

--Formal writing in specific genres of the profession, including book reviews, reflective essays, and presentations of research findings.

COURSE POLICIES:

Participation:

Attendance is mandatory. Each absence after the first one will cause a 20 point deduction to your final grade. You are expected to complete each week's reading before class so that you can participate constructively in a class discussion. Your participation grade will be based on the overall *quality* of your contributions to the class—not the quantity of contributions you make—and the professionalism with which you conduct yourself in scholarly discussion and debate. You can earn up to 6 points per class discussion. Each class discussion will be graded as follows: No constructive contributions to discussion = 0 points. Minimal participation = 1-3 points. Strong participation = 4-5 points. Outstanding participation = 6 points.

Presentations:

Each student will be assigned three presentations over the course of the semester. Main presentations will last from 12-15 minutes (speakers will be asked to conclude at 15 minutes). The presenter will be responsible to introduce the author, **concisely** summarize the argument, discuss the scholarly reception of the book, and assesses its historiographical significance. The student must also craft 3-5 questions for discussion arising from the reading. Two secondary presentations will be based on the accompanying articles or book chapters and will last from 5-10 minutes. In this presentation, the student will summarize the thesis and significance of the reading and relate it to the main reading. No reviews or author biographies are expected for the secondary presentations, but you should craft 2-4 questions that connects your reading to the theme of the week.

Discussion Forum

The Canvas site allows for class discussion to continue beyond the normal time/place constraints of the classroom. You are required to make at least ONE substantial thoughtful comment *week of at least 200 words*, and ONE constructive/observational reply to another student's posting each week.

Students will be assigned to a small "club" made up of 3-4 students. Your substantial comment must be posted by 12:00 midnight on Wednesday so that your classmates can read and respond to it before the class meets on Thursday. But you do not have to wait until Wednesday! In fact, you are encouraged to post early in the week. You need not have finished the reading when you post—you may post your reaction to any aspect of the book. Then, you must read the other posts in your "book club" and respond to one of them. Your response to another student's posting must

be a thoughtful and constructive response (such as if you were having a conversation in the same room with them). Please make your comments ORIGINAL. If someone has made a point you wanted to make find something else to say.

Your grade will be based on the substance of your posting which includes the thought and effort you put into it as well as whether it meets the minimum word length. You can post more than twice a week, but make sure that you have at least *one substantial posting each week of at least 200 words*, and one reply.

Written Work:

There will be two significant papers over the course of the semester. The first paper will be a 1200-1500 paper focusing on a primary source. The second paper will be a 2400-3000 word research paper on a human rights topic of interest to the student.

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| DUE DATES: | Primary Source Paper: | Monday, September 25 at 5 pm. |
| | Annotated Bibliography | Monday October 22 at 5 pm. |
| | Final Research Paper | Friday, December 1 at 5 pm. |

Detailed assignment sheets describing the expectations, length, and due dates for the writings assignment will be given out in class and posted on Canvas. Late papers will be penalized for each day the paper is late. All written assignments must be completed and turned in through Canvas in order to pass the class.

Grading Breakdown:

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| 75 Points: | Participation in class discussion. |
| 75 Points: | Discussion Board contributions |
| 75 Points: | Book Presentation |
| 25 Points: | Article Presentation #1 |
| 25 Points: | Article Presentation #2 |
| 100 Points: | Primary Source Paper |
| 25 Points: | Topic thesis/Annotated Bibliography |
| 100 Points: | Research Paper |

Final Grade Scale:

A 465-500; **A-** 450-464; **B+** 435-449; **B** 415-434; **B-** 400-414; **C+** 385-399; **C** 365-384; **C-** 350-364; **D+** 335-349; **D** 315-334; **D-** 300-314; **F** 299 or less.

Resources for Students with Disabilities:

Students with recognized disabilities should register with the Office of Accessibility Resources & Services (OARS). OARS is located on the second floor of the Elliott University Center (EUC) in Suite 215 and maintains a webpage at <http://ods.uncg.edu/>. The mission of OARS is to provide, coordinate, and advocate for services which enable undergraduate and graduate students with disabilities to receive equal access to a college education and to all aspects of university life

Academic Integrity Policy:

All work submitted in your name must be your own original work for this class with proper citation or credit given to all sources. All papers will be turned in using the “Turn It In” function on Canvas which automatically scans your paper for plagiarism. Each student should be familiar with the Academic Integrity Policy, and the penalties for plagiarism. Refer to this address on the UNCG website for more details: <http://studentconduct.uncg.edu/>

REQUIRED READING (available at UNCG’s Bookstore):

Readings:

The books listed below are available for purchase at the bookstore. Other readings and films can be accessed on Canvas.

Required Readings:

*Free access to e-book is available through Jackson Library on-line catalogue.

*Mark Phillip Bradley, *The World Reimagined: American and Human*
Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History*

*Jenny Martinez, *The Slave Trade and the Origins of International Human Rights Law*
Alison, Parker. *Articulating Rights: Nineteenth-Century American Women on Race, Reform, and the State Rights*

William Wells Brown, *Clotel or the President’s Daughter*

Don H. Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations*

*Susan J. Pearson. *The Rights of the Defenseless*

*Edward O’Donnell, *Henry George and the Crisis of Inequality: Progress and Poverty in the Gilded Age*

*Louise Newman, *White Women’s Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States*
Balakain, Peter, *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America’s Response*

Book Chapters are drawn from:

Pamela Slotte and Miia Halme-Tuomisaari, eds. *Revisiting the Origins of Human Rights*

Downs and Masur, eds. *The Work the Civil War Made*

Cynthia Soohoo, Catherine Albisa, and Martha F. Davis, *Brining Human Rights Home: Volume 1. A History of Human Rights in the United States.* Praeger, 2008.

Week 1. INTRODUCTION

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| Aug. 17 | Main Reading: | 1. Cmiel, Kenneth “The Recent History of Human Rights.” |
| | | 2. Lynn Hunt, “Revolutionary Rights” |
| | | 3. Paul G. Lauren, “A Human Rights Lens on U.S. History.” |

