



INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS AND WORLD POLITICS

SPRING SEMESTER 2011: PROVISIONAL SYLLABUS

Professor Chris Reus-Smit

**Thursdays, 11:00 a.m., Room 2, Badia Fiesolana
(First Seminar, 13 January 2011)**

Please register with Maureen.Lechleitner@eui.eu

Overview

The recognition and protection of human rights is now a major issue in international relations. This seminar introduces students to the philosophical, historical, and contemporary political dimensions of this issue. It breaks with the practice of focusing largely on 20th century developments, placing these developments in a broader historical context.

The program is divided into three sections. The first explores the nature of rights as distinctive kinds of moral claims, and differentiates between ‘special’ rights (which individuals hold because of particular contracts or customs) and ‘general’ rights (which they hold as integral moral beings). A distinction is also made here between ‘rights cultures’ and the principal historical alternatives, notably patronage and caste cultures. The second section explores how struggles for the recognition of individuals’ general rights were implicated in the historical development of the international system, focusing on three developments in particular: the expansion of the international system, the anti-slavery movement, and the laws of war. Key themes here will be the changing scope of the rights implicated in political struggles, the ways in which arguments about rights conditioned actors’ interests and strategic choices, and the shifting notions of who is a ‘rational adult’ entitled to such rights. The final section examines twentieth century developments, concentrating on the construction of the international human rights regime (and its regional variants), the impact of transnational advocacy networks on the domestic and international conduct of sovereign states, and the increasing use of human rights as a justification for the military interventions.

As the seminar unfolds, we will return to three fundamental issues: the normative foundations of general or human rights, the cultural particularity or universality of human rights, and the complex relationship between sovereignty and individual rights.

Seminar Program

1. Rights cultures
2. The nature of rights and rights claims
3. Human rights and their justification
4. Civil and political rights versus social and economic rights
5. Ideas and the constitution of politics
6. Individual rights and systemic change
7. Rights and emancipation
8. Transnational rights politics and state practices
9. The social construction of the international human rights regime
10. The limits of rights

Seminar Requirements

Researchers who wish to take this seminar for credit must meet the Department's attendance requirements and complete a research paper (5,000 words) that should be submitted no later than (to be determined).

Researchers who wish to audit the seminar need approval from Professor Reus-Smit and they are expected to meet normal attendance requirements, complete all required readings, and participate actively in seminar discussions. Researchers are not permitted to 'drop in' for the occasional week that interests them.

SEMINAR READINGS

Discussion is a crucial part of this seminar, and it is essential that researchers prepare by doing all of the required readings each week.

Week 1 Rights cultures

Christian Reus-Smit, 'Toward an Historical Sociology of Rights Politics'
(Unpublished Manuscript).

Mary Ann Glendon, *Rights Talk: The Impoverishment of Political Discourse*
(New York: Free Press, 1994), Chapters One and Two.

Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*
(London: Paladin, 1972), pp. 104-150.

S. N. Eisenstadt and Louis Roniger, 'Patron-Client Relations as a Model for
Structuring Social Exchange', *Comparative Studies in Society and
History* (Vol.22, No.1, 1980), pp.42-77.

Week 2 The nature of rights and rights claims

Joel Feinberg, *Rights, Justice, and the Bounds of Liberty* (Princeton NJ:
Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 130-155.

H. L. A. 'Are There Any Natural Rights?', in Jeremy Waldron (ed), *Theories
of Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

Peter Jones, *Rights* (London: Macmillan, 1994), pp. 12-26.

Week 3 Human rights and their justification

John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,
1980), pp.198-230

Jack Donnelly, *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice* (Ithaca:
Cornell University Press, 2003), pp.7-56.

Richard Rorty, 'Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality', in The
Belgrade Circle, *The Politics of Human Rights* (London: Verso,
1999), pp. 67-83.

Chris Brown, *Practical Judgement in International Political Theory*
(London: Routledge Press, 2010), pp. 53-71.

Week 4 The priority of rights: civil and political versus social and economic

Henry Shue, *Basic Rights: Subsistence, Affluence, and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996 Second Edition), pp. 3-87.

Theodor Meron, 'On the Hierarchy of Human Rights', *American Journal of International Law* (Vol.80, No.1, January 1986), pp.1-23.

Rhoda Howard, 'The Full-Belly Thesis: Should Economic Rights Take Priority over Civil and Political Rights?', *Human Rights Quarterly* (Vol.5, No.4, November 1983), pp.467-490.

Week 5 Ideas and the constitution of politics

Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics, Volume One: Regarding Method* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 103-127, 145-157.

Neta Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.11-81.

Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane, *Ideas and Foreign Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 199?), pp. 3-30.

Jack Goldsmith and Eric A. Posner, *The Limits of International Law*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 107-134.

Week 6 Individual rights and systemic change

Christian Reus-Smit, 'Struggles for Individual Rights and the Expansion of the International System', *International Organization* (Vol.65, No.2, 2011).

Bonny Ibhawoh, *Imperialism and Human Rights* (Albany: State University of New York, 2007), pp.29-84.

Week 7 Rights and emancipation

Neta Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002) pp. 159-200.

Joel Quirk, 'The Anti-Slavery Project: Linking the Historical and Contemporary', *Human Rights Quarterly* (Vol.28, No.3, August 2006), pp. 565-598.

Week 8 Transnational rights politics and changing state practices

Thomas Risse, Stephen Ropp, and Kathryn Sikkink, *The Power of Human Rights*, (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.????

Beth A Simmons, *Mobilizing Human Rights: International Law in Domestic Politics* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.3-154.

Micheline R. Ishay, *The History of Human Rights* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 315-356.

Week 9 The social construction of the human rights regime

Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: Norton, 2008), pp.15-69.

Mary Ann Glendon, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the University Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: Random House, 2001), p

Paul Gordon Lauren, *The Evolution of Human Rights: Visions Seen* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), pp.172-240.

Week 10 The limits of rights