Rights in Political Theory and International Relations

Winter 2012

Professor Rainer Bauböck
Professor Chris Reus-Smit

Tuesdays 3-5pm
Seminar Room 2

Register with: Maureen.Lechleitner@eui.eu

Overview

This seminar explores the justifications for human and citizenship rights and the relation between these two types of general rights from the perspective of international relations theory and normative political theory.

The seminar is structured into two main thematic blocks. In the first one, we introduce the topic by discussing the origin of the language of rights (week 1), theoretical conceptions of rights (week 2), 19th century critiques of human rights (week 3), and contemporary theory debates about their justifications (week 4).

The second theme is the contested universal scope of rights. We will discuss three problems that concern boundaries in the double sense of moral limits of universal rights regime and of the role of political boundaries in structuring these regimes. First, the right of peoples to self-determination, proclaimed by the UN Charter and the 1966 Human Rights Covenants (week 5): Who are the peoples that enjoy self-determination and how can a right to determine the boundaries of political community be conceived as a universal human right? Second, the distinction between citizens and non-citizens, which is seen to be a requirement for representative democracy (week 6): Can principles of democratic legitimacy determine claims to citizenship and justify the denial of admission to would-be immigrants? Third, human rights need to be enforced to become effective, but when do states have rights or duties to intervene in other states in order to protect human rights (week 7)? After discussing these three questions of how the international state system impacts on and constrains universal rights, we will reverse the question and ask how claims for rights have contributed to the evolution of that system itself (week 8).
For the penultimate meeting of the seminar (week 9), we have invited Henry Shue as a guest speaker who will talk about the question how global climate change can be conceived as a “third generation” human rights problem.

The seminar will conclude with a roundtable debate among seminar participants (week 10).

**Seminar Program**

1. Rights cultures
2. The nature of rights and rights claims
3. Human rights and their justification
4. Three critiques of human and citizenship rights
5. Boundary problem 1: The right to self-determination
6. Boundary problem 2: Citizenship inclusion and free movement
7. Boundary problem 3: Enforcement and humanitarian intervention
8. Individual rights and systemic change
9. Human rights and climate change
10. Rights in political and international theory: a reevaluation

**Seminar Requirements**

Participants are asked:

- to read all the basic seminar texts (mandatory readings are marked with an asterisk)
- to give one presentation that includes additional reading, with an outline disseminated until Friday of the week before
- *to engage actively in discussions, and this includes preparing oral comments for discussion based on the reading and the outline of the presentation*

Researchers who wish to take this seminar for credit, must write a research paper. They must send an outline before 6 March. The full paper has to be submitted by 31 May to Maureen.Lechleitner@eui.eu.

Auditing participants should register with the professors, do all mandatory reading and attend regularly
Seminar Readings

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

Week 1
(17 January) Rights cultures


Week 2
(24 January) The nature of rights and rights claims


Week 3
(31 January) Human rights and their justification


Week 4
(7 February) Three critiques of citizenship and human rights
Guest Speaker: Inés Valdez, Max Weber Fellow)


'Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen'; many editions available, for example in Dale Van Kley (ed.), The French Idea of Freedom. The Old Regime and the Declaration of Rights of 1789 (Standford, Cal., 1994), pp. 1-5


Week 5
(14 February) Boundary problem 1: The right to self-determination


Week 6
(21 February) Boundary problem 2: Citizenship inclusion and free movement


Week 7
(28 February) Boundary problem 3: Enforcement and humanitarian intervention


Week 8
(6 March) Individual rights and systemic change


* Bonny Ibhawoh, Imperialism and Human Rights (Albany: State University of New York, 2007), pp.29-84.
Week 9  
(13 March)   **Human rights and climate change**  
*Guest speaker: Professor Henry Shue*


Week 10  
(20 March)   **Rights in political and international theory: a re-evaluation**