This course will look at the literature of human rights, -- both legal texts that shape formal conceptions of rights and literary texts (classic and contemporary, fiction and non-fiction) that elucidate situations in which rights are at issue. Addressing the various critiques of legal accounts of "human rights," the course explores how literature (broadly construed) grants us a deeper understanding of what we might mean by such concepts as "freedom of expression." "due process." "torture," and "genocide."

Readings:

You will be asked, as well, to read various sections of the documents included in 25 Human Rights Documents. The syllabus may change as the semester progresses.

Key:

- x = xeroxed (in coursepack, available in 602 Philosophy Hall; most readings are excerpts from longer works).

1. Rights Before a Human Rights

   - Aeschylus, The Oresteia (458 B.C.) (x)
   - Magna Charta (HRR)
   - Jonathan Swift, A Modest Proposal (1729) (x)
   - Thomas Paine, The Rights of Man (1792) (HRR)

2. Slavery

   - John Locke, Second Treatise of the State of Nature / Slavery (1690) (x + HRR)
   - Testimonials (x)
   - The Dred Scott Case (1856-7) (x)
   - Toni Morrison, Beloved (1987)

3. Liberalism and the Industrial Revolution

   - John Stuart Mill, On Liberty (1859) (x)
   - Charles Dickens, Hard Times (1854) (x)
   - Upton Sinclair, The Jungle
4. Socialism and the Totalitarian State
   - Karl Marx, *Communist Manifesto* (HRR)
   - Karl Marx, *On the Jewish Question* (pp.194-99) (HRR)
   - George Orwell, *Animal Farm* (1945)
   - George Orwell, *1984* (1949)

5. Genocide I: The Holocaust
   - Elie Wiesel, *Night*

Film Segments:
   - Night and Fog
   - The Nuremberg Trials

6. Torture
   - Cesare Beccaria, *Treatise on Crimes and Punishments* (1766) (HRR)
   - Franz Kafka, *In the Penal Colony* (1914) (x)
   - Ariel Dorfman, *Death and the Maiden*

7. Trials and Due Process
   - Franz Kafka, *The Trial* (c.1921)
   - Thiong’s Ngugi-Wa, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*

Film Segments:
   - Trials

8. Detention and Forced Labor
   - Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Doc)
   - Wole Soyinka, *The Man Died* (x)

9. War and Crimes
   - Lieber Code (x)
   - Hague Conventions, Geneva Conventions & Protocol I (x)
   - *War Zones: Voices from the World’s Killing Fields* (x)

10. Censorship, Freedom of Expression, and Dissent
    - Vaclav Havel, *Protest*
    - PEN Testimonials
    - *The Rushdie Affair* (x)
    - Cases (x)

11. Colonialism and Apartheid
12. Gender Discrimination/Violence

- Vienna and Beijing Declarations (1993, 1995) (HRR)
- Marilyn French, *The War Against Women* (x)
- Nawal El Saadawi, *Woman at Point Zero*

13. Genocide II

- Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You...* (1998) (x)
- Testimonials (x)
- Cases (x)

14. Conclusion

Requirements

The course will be run as a combination lecture/seminar. Students are expected to participate in discussions and may be asked to give brief presentations. There is a 5-7pp. paper due on Tuesday Nov. 24 in 602 Philosophy Hall at 5:00pm, and an exam (a range of possible essay questions will be predistributed; some of these will appear on the exam). Students may opt to take the exam for credit only, and write a long research paper in addition, with the permission of the instructor (one-paragraph proposal due Oct. 26th in class).

Books

The following books have been ordered at Labyrinth Books, 536 W. 112th St. (Bwy/Amst):

4. *The Jungle*, Upton Sinclair
5. *1984*, George Orwell
7. *Night*, Elie Wiesel
9. *The Trial*, Franz Kafka, Schocken or Random House
10. *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, Thiongs Ngugi-Wa
11. *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, A. Solzenitsyn, NAL/Dutton
15. *A Small Place*, Jamaica Kincaid
16. *Woman at Point Zero*, Nawal El Saadawi