

EC 334/432: RELIGION AND HUMAN RIGHTS
CLAREMONT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
Spring 2011
Small Seminar Room, CST Library
Wednesdays, 1-3:50 p.m.

Richard Amesbury
Associate Professor of Ethics
Office Hours: Thursdays, 1-4 p.m. and by appointment
Craig 213
(909) 447-2581
ramesbury@cst.edu

Course Description:

What are *human rights*? Are they truly universal? How did we come to conceive of the human subject as a bearer of inalienable rights? How might such rights be grounded? What are the liabilities and limits of human rights thinking? This course examines varying conceptions of “human rights,” “religion,” and their relation, giving special attention to contested issues in contemporary scholarship.

Student Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- (1) be versed in and capable of engaging critically with contemporary scholarship on human rights and religion.
- (2) be able to articulate and defend critical-theoretical positions of their own, with respect to contested issues and problems in the field.
- (3) possess the skills and virtues necessary for constructive academic dialogue, research, writing, and presentation of work.

Assessment:

Students will:

- (1) submit one discussion question related to the week’s readings at the beginning of each class. [SLO 1]
- (2) take turns leading weekly seminar discussions of assigned readings. [SLOs 1 and 3]
- (3) write at least one short (1000-word) analytical paper in response to a week’s readings. This will be presented and discussed in class. [SLOs 1, 2, and 3]
- (4) write at least one short (500-word) response to another student’s analytic paper (see above) and the relevant text(s). This will also be presented and discussed in class. [SLOs 1, 2, and 3]
- (5) write two argumentative (analytical-critical) essays on topics chosen in consultation with the professor. [SLOs 1, 2, and 3]

Other requirements: Weekly attendance, reading, and constructive participation.

Texts:

- Michael Ignatieff, *Human Rights As Politics and Idolatry* (Princeton, 2001)
- Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Belknap, 2010)
- Michael J. Perry, *The Idea of Human Rights: Four Inquiries* (Oxford, 1998)
- Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton, 2008)

These books are available for purchase at Huntley Bookstore (as well as online) and may be on reserve at the CST Library. Additional required readings are on electronic reserve (e-res) via the CST Library's website (<http://cst.docutek.com/>). ***Please bring the assigned reading to class on the day we will be discussing it.***

Attendance and Participation:

Attendance and class participation are required and count toward your final grade. Come to class on time, ready to participate actively. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class. More than one absence will result in an automatic reduction of one's participation grade. Note that this policy makes no distinction between excused and unexcused absences.

Since most of our time together will be spent critically discussing the texts, it is essential for everyone to have read and thought carefully about the assigned material before coming to class. To that end, it will be important to create for yourself working conditions that are conducive to concentration and deep thought. Try to find a work space where you will not be distracted by friends and family, television, Facebook, etc. Map out the main arguments in the reading, and be prepared to criticize or defend them.

Once you arrive at class, make an effort to get involved in the conversation. Our goal is collaborative learning. Don't hesitate to ask questions if you need clarification or would like more information: if you are confused, it is likely that others are too!

Please turn off and store all cell phones and other electronic devices before entering the classroom. If you use a laptop to take notes, be sure to close all web browsers and other applications.

Student Presentations and Discussion:

Everyone is expected to bring to class **one discussion question** related to the week's readings. Good questions should be open-ended, so as to engender discussion; however, they should be reasonably specific and related to the text(s), so that discussion does not stray too far afield. These should be typed out, with your name on the sheet. Please bring two copies. These will be collected at the beginning of class and put in a pool of possible topics for discussion, from which the student discussion leader or I may draw.

You will write at least **one short (1000-word) analytical paper** in response to an assigned selection of one week's reading. This should involve a critical analysis of the assigned text(s) and conclude by raising some issues for in-class discussion. It is *not* a research paper: focus on the text at hand. Try to avoid either (a) merely summarizing the reading without critically analyzing it or (b) merely presenting your own ideas, without reference to the text(s). Instead, bring your own critical intelligence and background knowledge to bear on the reading, as you might when, e.g., reviewing a book for a journal. This paper should be typed, double-space, and be e-mailed to your respondent and me by 11:59 p.m. on the Sunday before class. Please also make enough copies for everyone else in the class ahead of time and distribute them on the day of the presentation. You will have approximately 10 minutes to present (read) this paper to the class. I would advise you to begin working on this paper in advance of the week in which these readings are assigned.

You will also write at least **one short (500-word) paper** in response to another student's analytical paper. This should raise points of disagreement you may have with what the other student wrote, whether with respect to the student's interpretation of the assigned text(s) or the student's analysis. You can also use the opportunity to defend the original author (of the assigned text(s)) against criticisms raised by the student or to extend the other student's analysis further, or in a different direction. This too should be typed, double-space. Please make enough copies of these ahead of time so that you can distribute them to everyone (myself included) in class. You will have approximately five minutes to present (read) this paper to the class, after which the student whose paper you are responding to will have approximately two minutes to respond. At that point, the discussion will be opened to the rest of the class, and a third student will moderate.

On some third occasion, you will **lead and moderate** such a discussion, asking questions as needed to spur the conversation. You can also draw from the possible discussion questions submitted by the entire class.

Depending on the size of the class, we may sometimes have two such sessions per class.

Papers:

For this course you will write **two argumentative (analytical-critical) essays**, based on the assigned readings. The recommended page length for those enrolled in EC 334 is 8-10 pages. For those enrolled in EC/REL 432, the recommended length is 12-15 pages. These papers must be typed, double-spaced, in a standard 12-point font (e.g., *Times*) with one-inch margins at the top and bottom of each page and 1.25-inch margins on either side (the default settings in Microsoft Word).

Points will be deducted for late work at the rate of one-third of a letter grade per day (e.g., a paper otherwise deserving of an "A" would receive a "B+" if late by two days), so please see me in advance if you are having trouble.

Academic Honesty:

All students are expected to adhere to basic standards of academic honesty and integrity. All work submitted is expected to be the student's own thought and expression unless another source is acknowledged and appropriately footnoted. Violation of academic honesty is regarded as an extremely serious offense. Discovery of such a violation may result in an "F" grade for the course, and possible termination as a student, or revocation of a degree previously granted. In any case, faculty members are obligated to report all apparent violations of academic honesty to the dean.

Plagiarism is literary theft, or offering the words or ideas of another as if they were one's own, with no acknowledgment of the source. Whenever the ideas or words used are taken from a source, this source must be given credit. This applies not only to direct quotations, but also to indirect quotations (in which the original statement is paraphrased). Sources that must be given credit include not only published books, journals, magazines, newspapers, etc., but also other types of media, such as electronic resources (CD-ROM, Internet, etc.), film, television, radio, and cassette recordings, as well as lectures and the work of other students. The principle also holds true for less direct borrowings, if the ideas in question are distinctive to the source as opposed to being considered common currency. (This is often a matter of judgment; when in doubt, students are advised to err on the side of giving too many citations, rather than too few.)

Cheating involves the use of any kind of assistance (e.g., written, oral, aural, or visual) that has not been specifically authorized.

Please be certain that you understand Claremont's policy on academic honesty, and let me know in advance if you have any questions.

Grading:

Your grade for the course will be determined as follows:

- | | |
|---|------------|
| ▪ PAPERS 1 and 2: | 60 percent |
| ▪ SHORT READING PAPER AND PRESENTATION: | 20 percent |
| ▪ RESPONSE PAPER AND PRESENTATION: | 10 percent |
| ▪ ATTENDANCE, PARTICIPATION AND MODERATION: | 10 percent |

Incompletes will be granted only when there are extenuating circumstances, such as illness. The granting of an Incomplete is for emergency situations and is not automatic, but is at the discretion of the professor. Incompletes are not granted merely for the convenience of the student who is concerned about his or her workload. An Incomplete may entail a grade reduction. All students who wish to request grades of Incomplete and are currently receiving scholarships or financial aid should consult with the Financial Aid office. Grades of Incomplete have an effect on a student's satisfactory academic progress and eligibility for scholarships and financial aid.

| Schedule | |
|----------|---|
| 1/19 | Introduction |
| 1/26 | U.N. General Assembly, “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” (available at: http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html); Amesbury, “What Are Human Rights?” (on e-res); Mahoney, “Clarifying Human Rights” (on e-res); Ishay, “What Are Human Rights? Six Historical Controversies” (on e-res); Perry, Chapter 2 |
| 2/2 | Ignatieff et al. |
| 2/9 | Rorty, “Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality” (on e-res); Amesbury, “Human Rights and the Problem of Grounding” (on e-res); Perry, Chapter 1; Henkin, “Religion, Religions, and Human Rights” (on e-res) |
| 2/16 | Nurser, “A Human Rights ‘Soul’ for a Secular World of ‘Faiths’” (on e-res); Hopgood, “Moral Authority, Modernity and the Politics of the Sacred” (on e-res) |
| 2/23 | MacIntyre, “Some Consequences of the Failure of the Enlightenment Project” (on e-res); Wolterstorff, Chapters 1-2; Milbank, “Against Human Rights” (on e-res); Witte, “Concluding Reflections: The Biography and Biology of Liberty in Early Modern Calvinism” (on e-res) |
| 3/2 | Wolterstorff, Part III; Kao, <i>Grounding Human Rights in a Pluralist World</i> (excerpts on e-res) |
| 3/9 | Paper 1 Due |
| 3/16 | Spring Recess |
| 3/23 | Hunt, “Bone of Their Bone” (on e-res); Asad, “On Torture, or Cruel, Inhuman, and Degrading Treatment” (on e-res); Asad “Reflections on the Origins of Human Rights” (video available at: http://vimeo.com/15788132) |
| 3/30 | Moyn, Preface, Chapters 1-3 |
| 4/6 | Moyn, Chapters 4-6 |
| 4/13 | Jack Donnelly, “Human Rights and Human Dignity: an Analytic Critique of Non-Western Conceptions of Human Rights” (on e-res); Perry, Chapter 3; An-Na’im (et al.), “Human Rights, Religion, and the Contingency of Universalist Projects” (on e-res); Asad, “Redeeming the ‘Human’ through Human Rights” (on e-res); Asad and An-Na’im, “Religion, Law, and the Politics of Human Rights” (on e-res) |

| | |
|------|--|
| 4/20 | Mayer, "Islam and Human Rights" (on e-res); Sharma, "Towards a Declaration of Human Rights by the World's Religions" (on e-res); "Universal Declaration of H.R. by the World's Religions" (on e-res); Twiss, "Theology, Tolerance, and Two Declarations of Human Rights" (on e-res); Amesbury, "Inter-Religious Declarations of Human Rights: Grounding Rights or Constructing 'Religion'?" (on e-res); Hicks, "Saving Darfur: Enacting Pluralism in Terms of Gender, Genocide, and Militarized Human Rights" (on e-res) |
| 4/27 | Religious Freedom Selections from the <i>Immanent Frame</i> (http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/) |
| 5/4 | Paper 2 Due |

Note: This syllabus is not a legal contract; the content of this course is subject to revision. Please consider this a working draft.