

Comparative Perspectives on State Violations of Human Rights: Physical Integrity Violations.

Recommended Use:

Designed for an intro to human rights class (with a political science focus), but could be modified for an upper level class as most students will not be able to answer all the questions during the class exercise correctly, unless they read the assigned reading really carefully (but it is ok if they cannot answer all the questions as many require discussion). The lesson would be ideally used as an intro to the comparative method, or comparative politics section of the course—it could also be used as an intro to Physical Integrity Violations (repression, state terror, political imprisonment, genocide, torture, disappearances).

Keywords: Comparative perspectives on human rights, comparative politics, physical integrity violations.

Objectives:

For students to get broad based answers about what factors are related to state repression of physical integrity violations. Also, for students to think broadly, and creatively, about possible cause and effect factors on state repression.

Readings/Materials:

Goodhart, Michael. (2009). *Human Rights: Politics and Practice*. Oxford University Press, First Edition, 2009. **(Chapter 5 only)**.

Teacher will also need printouts for each student or at a minimum for groups of 3 to share for the exercise. Printout will follow the list below—but teacher **MUST** remove the correct answers as students will try to answer the questions in their group first (this is, hopefully, when the creative thinking about cause and effect will take place).

Synopsis:

This lesson can begin with the teacher giving as much lecture material as they desire on the topic, yet the exercise can take up most of the discussion of lecture material if the teacher prefers that approach. The teacher should begin by discussing the comparative perspective on human rights. It should be focused on the comparative method applied to states. The teacher can go into as much, or little depth about comparative approaches to studying states, as they deem necessary. Then the teacher must briefly define physical integrity violations and how they are usually perpetrated by the state. Then students are given the class exercise below. The reading provides students with background on comparative politics and how the comparative method is applied to human rights, with a particular focus on state repression. The answers to the class exercise as buried in the reading, so the exercise can be used as a reading quiz as well (hopefully a fun type of quiz if presented the right way—silly prizes or points on some assignment).

Background information:

This assignment is designed for students with no background knowledge of human rights. However, the assignment would have to be modified if students did not do the reading. See above as far as what content students will need (the extent really depends on the teacher's focus)—comparative method and state repression of physical integrity violations.

Discussion Questions /Activity:

The following activity is really the most important part of the lesson. After the background info is given, have the students break up into teams of 3 and attempt to answer the following questions based on the reading. Make sure the teacher takes out the correct answers. Give students at least 15 minutes to work through the questions and provide their answers. Also ask them to think of WHY they think their answers are right. What are the mechanisms that they believe “causes” the association? Then in a Power Point, or spoken form, provide the right answers one at a time. First have groups verbally give their answers for each question from the handout one at a time. Discuss the mechanisms that the groups suggest and evaluate whether they hold water or not (based on reading). Some of the questions will require much more discussion than others (e.g. the question—“Ethnically divided countries are likely to engage in repression” requires more discussion than “Repression in the recent past makes future repression more likely”).

Class Activity—with discussion of answers.

What causes state repression of human rights?

Focus: Physical Integrity Violations (repression, state terror, political imprisonment, genocide, torture, disappearances).

Name (or team name): _____

Directions: Evaluate the following statements. According to the class textbook (Goodhart, Ch. 5) and class discussion, choose whether the evidence for the following statements is **strong**, or **mixed (i.e. studies are not conclusive)**. Choose **one** of them where the evidence is simply **weak (i.e. no evidence)**. Write your answer below each statement.

1. Repression in the recent past makes future repression more likely.

Answer: Strong

2. Lower levels of democracy result in higher levels of repression

Answer: Strong

3. Repression is greater in poor countries

Answer: Strong

4. Repression is more likely in the context of war (international and civil)

Answer: Strong

5. Repression is greater where states face armed threats and social dissent.

Answer: Strong

6. Repression greater in countries with large populations.

Answer: Strong

7. Countries with military regimes are more oppressive.

Answer: Strong

8. Rapid economic growth leads to greater state repression.

Answer: Mixed

9. Rapid population growth leads to greater state repression.

Answer: Mixed

10. Repression is greater in countries that were *not* British colonies.

Answer: Mixed

11. Countries with a leftist political regime are more repressive

Answer: Mixed

12. Countries with low levels of international trade engage in greater repression (globalization argument).

Answer: Mixed

13. Ethnically divided countries are likely to engage in repression.

Answer: Mixed

14. Different races are more likely to engage in state repression.

Answer: Weak

15. State with exclusionary ideologies are more likely to engage in repression.

Answer: Strong

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