

**EC 432: HUMAN RIGHTS AND RELIGION  
CLAREMONT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
CLAREMONT GRADUATE UNIVERSITY**

**Spring 2008**

**Craig 110**

**Tuesdays, 1-3:50 p.m.**

Richard Amesbury

Associate Professor of Ethics

Office Hours: Mondays, 2-5 p.m. and by appointment

Craig 213

(909) 447-2581

ramesbury@cst.edu

**Course Description:**

Is the relation between religion and human rights fundamentally adversarial, or do religious traditions harbor moral resources that can be invoked on behalf of human dignity? Is the universality inherent in the concept of human rights compatible with the particularity and plurality of the determinate religious faiths? What structural features of concrete religious communities impede the realization of the rights of all? This course will explore such questions through philosophical and ethical analysis.

**Texts:**

- Richard Amesbury and George M. Newlands, *Faith and Human Rights*
- Jack Mahoney, *The Challenge of Human Rights*
- Michael J. Perry, *The Idea of Human Rights*
- Michael Ignatieff, *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry*
- Elizabeth M. Bucar and Barbra Barnett (eds.), *Does Human Rights Need God?*
- Joseph Runzo, Nancy M. Martin, and Arvind Sharma, *Human Rights and Responsibilities in the World Religions*
- Carol Rittner, John K. Roth, and Wendy Whitworth (eds.), *Genocide in Rwanda*

These books are available for purchase at Cokesbury. Additional required readings are on electronic reserve (E-RES) via the CST Library's website (<http://cst.docutek.com/>). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is available online.

**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.

Usually I will speak for about 45 minutes (sometimes more, sometimes less), before opening the floor for discussion. After a 20-minute break midway through the class period, we will resume with a 20-minute student presentation, followed by further discussion.

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, 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. 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!

### **Student Presentations and Discussion:**

You will make at least two presentations to the class – one on an assigned reading and the other on the topic for your final paper.

Typically, the presentation on the reading will involve an explanation and critical analysis of (at least some portion of) a required text. Please consult with me at least one week beforehand, so that I will know generally what to expect. Plan to speak for approximately 20 minutes, and conclude by raising some questions that we can discuss together. Good questions ought to be open-ended, so as to engender discussion; however, they should be reasonably specific, so that discussion does not stray too far afield. Feel free to distribute outlines or other hand-outs. These should be copied ahead of time. Please let me know in advance if you will need any A/V equipment. I will provide further information on final paper presentations as we approach the end of the semester.

### **Papers:**

For this course you will write two 12- to 15-page essays. 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).

Bring a *complete* draft of your first paper to class for peer editing on the appropriate day. Final papers are due at the beginning of class on the dates noted in the schedule. Points will be deducted for late work, 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 your own thought and expression, unless another source is acknowledged and properly footnoted. Violation of academic honesty is regarded as an extremely serious offense. Under campus-wide policy, discovery of such violation may result in an "F" grade for the course, possible termination as a student, or revocation of a degree previously granted. Any work submitted for this course containing uncited material from another source (including an internet source) will automatically receive an "F." **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
- PRESENTATIONS 20 percent
- CLASS PARTICIPATION: 20 percent

Except in rare cases, I do not allow incompletes.

Schedule		
Date	Topic	Assignments
1/22	Introduction	
1/29	The Idea and History of Human Rights	Amesbury and Newlands, Preface and Chapters 1-2; Mahoney, Chapters 1-2; Hunt, "Bone of Their Bone" (on reserve); U.N. General Assembly, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (available at <a href="http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html">http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html</a> )
2/5		Pollis and Schwab, "Human Rights: A Western Construct with Limited Applicability" (on reserve); Mahoney, Chapters 3-4; Perry, Chapters 2-3
2/12	The Problem of Grounding	Ignatieff, "Human Rights as Politics" and "Human Rights as Idolatry"
2/19		Gutmann, "Introduction"; Hollinger, "Debates with the PTA and Others"; Orentlicher, "Relativism and Religion" (all in Ignatieff)
2/26	Human Rights: Religious or Secular?	Perry, Chapter 1; Stackhouse, "Why Human Rights Needs God" (in Bucar and Barnett); Novak, "God and Human Rights in a Secular Society" (in Bucar and Barnett); Amesbury and Newlands, Chapter 3
3/4		Henkin, "Religion, Religions, and Human Rights" (in Bucar and Barnett); Amesbury and Newlands, Chapter 4; Abdullahi A. An-Na'im, "The Synergy and Interdependence of Human Rights, Religion, and Secularism" (in Runzo et al.)

3/11	Religious Declarations of Human Rights?	<b>Paper 1 Due;</b> Arvind Sharma, “Towards a Declaration of Human Rights by the World’s Religions” (in Runzo et al.); “A Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the World’s Religions” (in Runzo et al.); Twiss, “Theology, Tolerance, and Two Declarations of Human Rights” (on reserve); Ann Elizabeth Mayer, “Islam and Human Rights” (on reserve)
3/18	<b>Spring Break</b>	
3/25	Religion and Violence	Ter Haar, “Rats, Cockroaches, and People like Us” (in Runzo et al.); Taylor, “Dilemmas 2” (on reserve)
4/1		<i>Hotel Rwanda</i> (film)
4/8		<i>Genocide in Rwanda</i> , pp. 1-125
4/15		<i>Genocide in Rwanda</i> , 127-275
4/22		<b>Presentations</b>
4/29		<b>Presentations</b>
5/6		<b>Paper 2 Due</b>

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