I maintain – and will do so until my dying days – that the greatest “revolution” in my lifetime (and yours as well) is the “human rights revolution.” Think about this: until a few short decades ago how a government treated its own citizens was nobody’s business. This has all changed (at least in theory), and what now exists is a universal recognition of “universal” human rights. On the other hand, we also live in a world where massive levels of human rights violations continue to exist, and where literally billions of people have been left without some form of human rights protection.

What I hope to do in this class is to feed off the passion and excitement for human rights that students invariably bring into this class. I assure you, there is no class that I teach that I do more tinkering with – and more worrying about -- than this one. Human rights is my field and I dearly hope I will be able to convey to you how and why this is. On the other hand, what I also hope to show is that human rights is more than simply singing “Kumbaya” (sp?) around a campfire.

In my view, one of the great problems with human rights is that there is a tendency for it to become quite abstract, or BORING to use a less charitable term. To help avoid that (I hope) this semester I have decided to completely change how I go about teaching this class. I have significantly reduced the amount of assigned reading and in its place I have added such things as film and outside speakers – and even a New Orleans brass band!

You should also note that I try to guard against seeing human rights as little more than distant atrocities. In that way, not only is a fair amount of the course focused specifically on human rights violations within the United States, but you will also see that in my own writing I offer a much different vision of what constitutes “responsibility” for human rights violations.

**Readings:** There are three assigned books. There is a recent book from me entitled *International Human Rights Law: Returning to Universal Principles*, which I assure you is not nearly as lifeless as its title would indicate. There is Alex Kotlowitz’s *There are No Children Here*, which is a book that you will remember the rest of your life. And finally, Paul Collier’s recently released *The Bottom Billion*, which is one of the few (perhaps only) books on international poverty that is readable.

In addition to this, there are some other reading assignment books on Moodle. I am learning about this program right now, but I have been told that it will provide you with access to these readings.
Grades: You will be writing a brief response paper for each of the assigned books (3 in all). Each of these will be worth 20% of your grade. In addition, you will write a paper on a research project that you might like to undertake – but will not undertake, at least not this semester. This “projected project” will be worth another 20% of your grade. The other 20% will be based on your “class contributions” (or lack thereof).

Course Overview

Jan. 15 Introduction: The State of the World

Read Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

Glance at [http://thereport.amnesty.org](http://thereport.amnesty.org) (but note this is really for the year 2007), especially overview and facts and figures

Glance at: Political Terror Scale (politicalterrorscale.org)

Jan. 20 “The Ex-Mas Feast” from Uwem Akpan, Say You’re One of Them

Jan 22 “Darwin’s Nightmare” (107 minutes)

Jan. 27 Paul Lauren, “My Brothers and Sisters Keeper” from The Evolution of International Human Rights

Jan. 29 Michael Ignatieff “Human Rights as Idolatry” and Makau Mutua, “Savages, Victims and Saviors”

Feb. 3 “Terrorism” (Part I) “Arna’s Children (85 minutes)

Feb 5 class to be held on Sunday Feb. 8 and Monday Feb. 9

Feb. 8: Adina Hoffman and Taha Muhammad Ali “My Happiness Bears No Relation to Happiness: A Poet’s Life in the Palestinian Century”

Feb. 9: Peter Cole, “Things On Which I’ve Stumbled”

Feb. 10 Read: Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment Susan Sontag, “Torture”

Feb. 12 The Right to Health and Children’s Rights

Howe and Covell, “Children’s Rights” from Empowering Children: Children’s Rights Education as a Pathway to Citizenship
Reports by Paul Hunt (former) Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health

U.N. Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, “General Comment No. 14”

Feb. 17 & 19 “Standard Operating Procedure”

Feb. 24 “Refugee All Stars” (79 minutes)

Feb. 26 class will be held on Friday Feb. 27. There will be a talk by Mindy Fullilove, author of Root Shock: How Tearing Up Cities is Bad for America, which is part of the series “Twilight of a Neighborhood: Asheville’s East End Community,” 7 p.m. Humanities Lecture Hall

March 3 & 5 Mark Gibney, International Human Rights Law: Returning to Universal Principles

Spring Break

March 17 & 19 Spike Lee, “When the Levees Broke” and Hot 8 Brass Band (March 20)

March 24 & March 26 Alex Kotlowitz, There are No Children Here

March 31 & April 2 “Terrorism” (Part II) “USA v. Al-Arian” (100 minutes)

April 7 & 9 The Death Penalty in the United States

“The Trials of Daryl Hunt” (106 minutes)/Glen Edward Chapman (former Death Row Inmate) and Pam Laughon, UNCA Dept. of Psychology

Ingle, “Last Rights”

April 14 & 16 Truth, Reconciliation – and Prosecution

”Long Night’s Journey Into Day” (94 minutes)

Makau Mutua, “Hope and Despair for the New South Africa”

Horton, “Justice After Bush”

April 21 & 23 Poverty Eradication

Paul Collier, The Bottom Billion

April 28 “Pray the Devil Back to Hell” (72 minutes)

April 30 Report on proposed projects