

University of California Berkeley

Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Policy: Three Perspectives

Spring 1998-African American Studies 139 AC-PACS 128 AC

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Hours: Wed.- 10-11:30 & by appointment

Most Human Rights courses are taught from the perspective of the struggle to achieve international legal standards resting on a base of universal human rights. This course will look at human rights from the political perspective of three culturally distinct domestic groups. While the student will be introduced to the philosophy of human rights and the international legal conventions currently in force, the focus of the course will be on U.S. foreign policy and the attempts by three racial/cultural groups to influence that policy using human rights as a trump. That is, human rights arguments are used to distinguish the demands of the group from other interest group demands such as trade or national security.

The end of the ideological struggle central to the Cold War has created a vacuum in geopolitical theories explaining international politics. At the same time the dramatic increase in racial, ethnic and religious conflict has promoted efforts to understand and resolve such conflict before it reaches the catastrophic proportions of Bosnia, Rwanda and Somalia. Scholars such as Samuel P. Huntington argue that the fundamental source of conflict will be cultural rather than economic or political. What do such views mean for a heterogeneous country like the United States composed of many racial or ethnic groups? Who decides the national interest?

A nation's choice of one course of action or policy over another and its selection of instruments to implement it are often determined by complex, and largely subconscious, aspects of culture. State Department official Michael Vlahos contends that "the way people think and behave at very sophisticated levels is driven by culture." Eugene Rostow observes that "the web of traditions, beliefs, and habits which constitute a culture defines the goals it aspires to reach through political action, and sets limits on its capacity to achieve change." This is particularly true of U.S. foreign policy, primarily because various historical myths and perceptions provide an essential part of the bedrock on which a national sense of belonging, patriotism, purpose, and rationality rests. American presidents constantly refer to these myths to gain support for their policies, including the use of force.

Human rights courses are usually taught from the top-down. That is, the major universal human rights instruments are presented as givens growing out of World War II. Once the conventions and covenants are discussed, attention then focuses on the struggle to implement various rights. Questions of identity and representation are marginal if present at all. This course is constructed from the bottom-up. It will look at how three groups have constructed their identity, how that identity is represented publically, and finally at how the groups use human rights instruments and arguments to influence U.S. foreign policy.

An approach to human rights that looks at both the national culture(s) and various sub-cultures is at odds with both the "realist" and "idealist" schools of international relations, yet it provides key insights into several significant questions regarding U.S. foreign policy. Specifically, we will examine the human rights demands of three specific groups-- African Americans, Cuban Americans, and Irish Americans. For each group, certain questions will be emphasized. For African Americans, key questions involve identity, the lack of access to decision makers, and the generally low priority accorded to Africa in U.S. foreign policy. The South African divestment movement will be a particular point of reference. Cuban Americans are often seen as exercising disproportionate influence on U.S. foreign policy. Analyzing their lobbying efforts we will examine the role of ideology, the question of immigration, and their relationship to other Latino and Caribbean groups. Irish American nationalism has a long and contentious history that permits us to examine the issues of religion and violence in the context of human rights. The efforts of all three groups will be compared and contrasted with each other in terms of their success in shaping the national interest. Which group has been the most successful and why? Which group has been the least successful? Has access of or lack of access changed over time?

Grading

Grading will be based on the following: a mid-term examination (33%), a final examination (33%), and a research paper (33%). The topic of the paper will be selected by the student with the approval of the professor and will focus on the domestic lobbying efforts of an ethnic or racial group as they promote a human rights issue in foreign policy. A one page outline must be submitted by the sixth week of class. The paper is due on the 12th week of class. During the 13th or 14th week of class each student is expected to make an oral presentation of their paper topic (group presentations are also welcome). Late papers will be penalized. Make-up exams will be given only with the presentation of a valid excuse.

Required Reading

- o Jack Holland, *The American Connection: US guns, money and influence in Northern Ireland*
- o Paul Gordon Lauren, *Power and Prejudice: The Politics and Diplomacy of Racial Discrimination*
- o Felix R. Masud-Piloto, *With Open Arms: Cuban Migration to the United States*
- o Course Reader (available at Odin)
 - o "Human Rights: Getting Through the Policy Maze" in *Congressional Quarterly* (1978)
 - o Challenger, Herschelle, "The Influence of Black America on U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Africa" in A.A. Said (ed.) *Ethnicity and U.S. Foreign Policy*
 - o Donnelly, Jack, "Cultural Relativism and Universal Human Rights" in *Human Rights Quarterly* (1984)
 - o Falk, Richard, "The Global Promise of Social Movements" in *Alternatives* XII (1987)
 - o Glendon, Mary, "Chapter One" in *Glendon Rights Talk*
 - o Gross, Bert, "Human Rights" in *Encyclopedia of the Future*
 - o Guelke, Adrian, "The United States, Irish Americans and the Northern Ireland Peace Process" in *International Affairs* (1996)
 - o Henry, Charles P. and Tunua Thrash, "U.S. Human Rights Petitions Before the UN" in *Black Scholar* (1996)
 - o Hunt, Michael, "The Hierarchy of Race" in Hunt *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*
 - o Huntington, Samuel, "The Clash of Civilizations" in *Foreign Policy* (1993)
 - o Ignatiev, Noel, "Something in the Air" in Ignatiev *How the Irish Became White*
 - o Kurth, James, "The Real Clash of Civilizations" in *Washington Times* (1994)
 - o Longmyer, Kenneth, "Black American Demands" in *Foreign Policy* (1985)
 - o Mazuri, Ali, "The Moral Paradigms of the Superpowers" in Mazuri *Cultural Forces and World Politics*
 - o Patterson, Orlando, "Freedom, Slavery, and the Modern Construction of Rights" in Olwen Hufton (ed.) *Historical Change and Human Rights*
 - o Payne, Richard, "Foreign Policy Begins at Home" in Payne *The Clash With Distant Cultures*
 - o Richardson, Bill, "Hispanic American Concerns" in *Foreign Policy* (1985)

- Robbins, Carla Anne, "Dateline Washington: Cuban American Clout" in *Foreign Policy* (1992)
- Rorty, Richard, "Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality" in Stephen Shute and Susan Hurley (eds.) *On Human Rights*
- Shattuck, John, "Introduction" in the *U.S. Report on Civil and Political Rights* (1994)
- Smith, James, "The Limits of Liberalism" and "The Ideological Divide" in Smith *The Idea Brokers*
- Tarrow, Sidney, "National Politics and Collective Action" in *American Review of Sociology* (1988), 14
- Tonelson, Alan, "Otherworldly Visions of Vital Interests" in *Washington Times* (1994)
- Torres, Maria de los Angeles, "From Exiles to Minorities: The Politics of Cuban-Americans" in F. Chris Garcia (ed.) *Latinos and the Political System*
- Watanabe, Paul, "Ethnicity and Foreign Policy" in Watanabe *Ethnic Groups, Congress, & American Foreign Policy*
- Weissbrodt, David, "The Influence of Interest Groups on the Development of U.S. Human Rights Policies" in Natalie Kaufman Hevener (ed.) *The Dynamics of Human Rights in U.S. Foreign Policy*

Course Outline

I. Human Rights in Theory

What is a human right? Are they universal? Are there positive and negative rights? Do they all have the same force?

Read:

- Course Reader- Rorty, Patterson

II. Human Rights in Practice

Are governments bound to observe human rights? What is the enforcement mechanism? How are human rights monitored?

Read:

- Course Reader- Farer, Gross

III. United States Foreign Policy

What foreign policy theories or geopolitical paradigms inform U.S. policy? Who defines the national interest? Are human rights and national security incompatible?

Read:

- Course Reader- Glendon, Maxfield, The Economist, Tonelson

IV. U.S. Human Rights Policy in Practice

Does economic growth lead to increased respect for human rights? What is the relationship of democracy and human rights? What has been the U.S. role in international standard setting?

Read:

- Course Reader- Henkin, Shattuck, Obadele, Mazrui

V. The Role of NGOs

Are human rights groups interest groups? Whose interest do they promote? How do they compare with other lobbyists like transnational corporations?

Read:

- Course Reader- Otto, Wiarda, Tarrow, Falk,

VI. The Role of Culture

Are human rights an imposition of the West? Are civil and political rights more important than economic, social and cultural rights? How do media and NGOs shape policy demands?

Read:

- Course Reader- Huntington, Kurth, Payne, Rentlin, Said, Watanabe

VII. Case Study: African American Influence

How do race and representation influence national interest? What options are there to counter the absence of elite access?

Read:

- Lauren, 1st half
- Course Reader- Longmyer, Challenor

VIII. Case Study: African American Influence

Can moral principle defeat economic interest? Does divestment injure the masses more than political leaders?

Read:

- Lauren, 2nd half
- Course Reader, Henry, Felton

Guest Speaker

IX. Case Study: Cuban American Influence

What impact does geography have on the national interest? How does language difference impact cultural perception?

Read:

- Masud-Piloto, 1st half
- Course Reader, Richardson, Torres

X. Case Study: Cuban American Influence

How are violations of international law justified? Why do we isolate some Communist regimes but not others?

Read:

- Masud-Piloto, 2nd half
- Course Reader, Robbins

Guest Speaker

XI. Case Study: Irish American Influence

What is the difference between race and ethnicity historically? What are the similarities between religious minorities and racial minorities in terms of human rights?

Read:

- Holland, 1st half
- Course Reader, Ignatiev

XII. Case Study: Irish American Influence

How does the issue of violence influence domestic support? How do generational differences effect identity and relationships to homeland?

Read:

- Holland, 2nd half
- Course Reader, Guelke

Guest Speaker

PAPERS DUE

XIII. Student Presentations

XIV. Student Presentations

XV. Review