

**HRTS 3149—Human Rights Through Film****Instructor:** Daniel Tagliarina**Class Time:** MWF 9:00-11:30**Course Overview**

This course examines the intersection of human rights as an issue of international and domestic politics and film as a widespread form of pop culture. The course provides an introduction to some of the many types of human rights issues, starting with the question of “What are human rights?”, explored via the cinematic medium. Students will learn factual information about these issues while also analyzing how film, as a medium, allows filmmakers to manipulate images to consciously or unconsciously convey meaning to viewers. We will consider the differences between fiction and non-fiction approaches, the visual and narrative structure of feature films, and the ethical dilemma of depicting human suffering. Both the substantive content and the technical aspects of the films will be analyzed through a combination of lecture, viewing, and discussion.

**Reading Requirements:**

- All readings are available on the course HuskyCT site

**Learning Objectives**

This course will provide you with the opportunity to develop an understanding of human rights as a complex set of concepts, and the role of film in mediating those concepts. Approaching the topic from an interdisciplinary perspective, students will be asked to critically examine film depictions of human rights, considering their structural and narrative elements as well as their specific informational content. Throughout the semester, we will consider the questions of *what* rights are asserted, *how* films depict the causes and consequences of rights violations, *why* filmmakers make the choices they do, and *who* might constitute the “audience” for these films. At the end of the semester, you should be able to:

1. articulate how film can be used in various human rights issues;
2. explain the importance of different types of film in human rights issues;
3. critically evaluate the role of film and filmmakers in different human rights struggles;
4. formulate and express your views on these matters both verbally and in writing.

These objectives are ordered from most basic to most advanced (and least-to-most important): (2) is more important than (1) while building upon (1), and so on. While it is nice if you remember the details of the issues we study from this course years later, this is less important than developing the cognitive skills and abilities necessary to critically evaluate and engage documentary and narrative fiction filmic depictions of human rights topics. Put simply: you will learn important critical thinking skills, particularly directed towards analyzing visual media. These skills will make you a more informed citizen, and hopefully a more informed, critical consumer of media.

**Grading and Requirements:**

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|---------------------------|-----|
| • Participation           | 25% |
| • Reading Quizzes         | 10% |
| • Journal                 | 10% |
| • Papers (3 at 2-4 pages) | 30% |
| • Final Exam Paper        | 25% |

### Participation

This course is, *to a large extent*, what you make of it. The more you participate, the more fun it will be and the more you will learn. Also, the more you participate, the better the grade you'll get. If you do not talk at all, 25% of your grade is going to be really not-so-good. To aid your participation (as well as your writing of the papers and final exam paper), I have provided a "Film Inventory" at the end of this syllabus. The Film Inventory is a two-page document that will help organize your notes from the movies. This will help you recall points you want to make in the discussion afterwards. Part of participation is filling out these sheets. Trust me regarding one thing: *I cannot begin to tell you how much in your best interest it is to fill out these sheets as completely as possible* (see "Final Exam Paper" below).

**NOTE: YOU are responsible for bringing a fresh information inventory to each class. This is SUPER important.** Make sure you have both pages. There is a clean copy at the end of the syllabus that you can print or copy. For more information regarding class participation, please see the Appendix that specifically addresses student participation.

### Reading Quizzes

For every class, with the exception of the first and last class, there is an associated reading quiz. These quizzes are short, consisting of several multiple choice questions *or* one or two short answer responses. All quizzes will be online through HuskyCT, and are there to help guide your reading and ensure the timely completion of the reading. Quizzes will be available for 48 hours each, and must be completed *before* the start of class the day we are scheduled to discuss the readings on which the quizzes are based. There are twelve reading quizzes throughout the semester. Your highest ten grades will count as 10% of your grade in the course. These will be graded on a ✓+, ✓, and ✓- basis. A ✓+ means you demonstrated that you did the reading and comprehended it. A ✓ means you showed that you at least tried the reading, but maybe struggled with it or misunderstood part of it. Finally, a ✓- means you either did not do the reading, or completely missed the point of the reading and/or question. Absolutely no make ups will be given for quizzes, regardless of circumstances. The ability to drop two quizzes accounts for missing a quiz for any reason.

### Journal

After each film we watch in class, students will be given a writing prompt and approximately 5-10 minutes to respond to the prompt. These prompts will be collected in a journal and handed in at the end of the semester. The goal of the journal is to capture initial reactions to the film, while also priming the pump for the class discussion to follow. This is an informal writing exercise, but should be taken seriously all the same. The journal counts for 10% of the course grade. While the journal need not be a bound notebook, all journal entries must be submitted, bound/stapled together, with appropriate dates and movie titles at the top of each entry.

### Papers

Students will write three papers for this course. These papers will respond to specific questions provided in class and work to synthesize the readings, films, and discussions that are on a unified topic—specifically, the films in weeks 2, 3, and 4. These papers are due on the Monday following the wrapping up of a topic (June 16, June 23, and June 30). All papers must be turned in in physical copy in class, as well as uploaded through SafeAssign in HuskyCT. Uploads should happen before the due date and time, and no paper will receive a grade without both of these steps. Specific paper assignment questions will be distributed in class on the Friday of weeks 2, 3, and 4. Each paper is worth 10% of your course grade for a collective 30% from these papers.

## Final Exam Paper

During the final class of the semester, I will show a movie. You will not know in advance what movie this will be. At home, you will use both your notes from that movie and your notes from lectures and movies throughout the semester to answer the exam question(s), which will be provided in class after viewing the film. This final is more of a paper than an exam, as the prompt will make clear. Students will have 24 hours to complete the take home final.

## Class Schedule

### **Week 1: Human Rights and Film**

*We start the semester with a basic introduction to the course topic and organization. Specifically, we'll start with a working definition of "human rights" through an examination of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and jump into our discussion of movies with a consideration of the controversial and much discussed film by Invisible Children: KONY 2012. Next, we focus on the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century as a particularly important historical period for both the emergence of human rights ideals and for the development of film culture. In particular, we consider the way in which film both contributed and responded to the paradigmatic human rights atrocity: the Holocaust.*

### **June 2: *Film*: KONY 2012**

**Reading:** The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (in class)

Gettleman, Jeffrey. 2012. "In Vast Jungle, U.S. Troops Aid in Search for Kony." *New York Times*. April 29. Available at:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/30/world/africa/kony-tracked-by-us-forces-in-central-africa.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=1&\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/30/world/africa/kony-tracked-by-us-forces-in-central-africa.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&_r=1). (in class)

Shepherd, Tory. 2013. "Remember Kony 2012? Well, it's 2013. What Happened?" *news.com.au*. January 11. Available at: <http://www.news.com.au/world/remember-kony-2012-well-its-2013-what-happened/story-fndir2ev-1226550575923>. (in class)

Greenblatt, Alan. 2014. "Joseph Kony Is Back In The News. Do Teenagers Still Care?." *NPR*. March 25. Available at:

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/parallels/2014/03/25/294315138/joseph-kony-is-back-in-the-news-do-teenagers-still-care>. (in class)

John, Arit. 2014. "U.S. Special Forces Worry #BringBackOurGirls Will Tweet Them Into Africa Like #Kony2012 Did." *The Wire*. May 27. Available at:

<http://www.thewire.com/politics/2014/05/us-special-forces-worry-bringbackourgirls-will-tweet-them-into-africa-like-kony2012-did/371655/>. (in class)

Testa, Jessica. 2014. "Two Years After KONY 2012, Has Invisible Children

Grown Up?" *BuzzFeed*. March 9. Available at: <http://www.buzzfeed.com/jtes/two-years-after-kony-2012-has-invisible-children-grown-up>. (optional)

### **June 4: *Film*: *Triumph of the Will* (1935)**

**Reading:** Devereaux, Mary. 2009. "Beauty and Evil: The Case of Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*." In *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures: An Anthology*, Noël Carroll and Jinhee Choi, eds. Hoboken: Blackwell Publishing, 347-61.

Chanan, Michael. 2007. "The New Documentary Wave." In *The Politics of Documentary*, Michael Chanan. Trowbridge, Wiltshire, UK: British Film Institute, 2-20.

Scott, A.O. 2010. "Everybody's a Critic of the Critics Rabid Critics." *The New York Times*. July 21. Available at:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/25/movies/25scott.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/25/movies/25scott.html?_r=1).

**June 6: Film:** *Night and Fog* (1956)

**Reading:** Chapter 1 from: Monaco, James. 2009. *How to Read a Film: Movies, Media, and Beyond: Art, Technology, Language, History, Theory* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.

Carroll, Noël. 2006. "Fiction, Non-Fiction, and the Film of Presumptive Assertion: A Conceptual Analysis." In *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures: An Anthology*, Noël Carroll and Jinhee Choi, eds. Hoboken: Blackwell Publishing, 154-71.

Chanan, Michael. 2007. "The Documentary Field." In *The Politics of Documentary*, Michael Chanan. Trowbridge, Wiltshire, UK: British Film Institute, 21-36.

**Week 2: Government Oppression and Human Rights**

*Unlawful and/or unjust state violence—summary executions, mass killings, torture, and arbitrary arrests—against civilians is often regarded as among the most egregious of human rights violations. Violence is also one of the most enduring movie subjects. This week's films look at depictions of state violence in both the documentary setting as well as in a mainstream fictional film.*

**June 9: Film:** *When the Mountains Tremble* (1983)

**Reading:** Nichols, Bill. 2010. "How Can We Define Documentary Film?" In *Introduction to Documentary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1-41.

Chanan, Michael. 2007. "Rules of Evidence." In *The Politics of Documentary*, Michael Chanan. Trowbridge, Wiltshire, UK: British Film Institute, 37-57.

Wertheimer, Linda. 2007. "Guatemala Struggles for Peace, Prosperity." NPR. January 6. Available at:

<http://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=6734094>.

Babington, Charles. 1999. "Clinton: Support for Guatemala Was Wrong." March 11.

Available at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/daily/march99/clinton11.htm>.

Jardin, Xení. 2007. "Group Works to Identify Remains in Guatemala." NPR. January 29.

Available at: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7019560>.

**June 11: Film:** *Long Night's Journey Into Day* (2000)

**Reading:** Rorty, Richard. 2001. "Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality." In *The Philosophy of Human Rights*, Patrick Hayden, ed. St. Paul: Paragon House, 241-56.

Chanan, Michael. 2007. "The Documented Point of View." In *The Politics of Documentary*, Michael Chanan. Trowbridge, Wiltshire, UK: British Film Institute, 96-114.

Chanan, Michael. 2007. "Public Address." In *The Politics of Documentary*, Michael Chanan. Trowbridge, Wiltshire, UK: British Film Institute, 133-147.

**June 13: Film:** *V for Vendetta* (2005)

**Reading:** BBC News. 2013. “What is Thatcherism?” April 10. Available at:  
<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-22079683>.

Rogers, Simon. 2013. “How Britain changed under Margaret Thatcher. In 15 Charts.”  
*The Guardian*. April 8. Available at:  
<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/datablog/2013/apr/08/britain-changed-margaret-thatcher-charts>.

Kwek, Glenda. 2011. “V for Vague: Occupy Sydney’s Faceless Leaders.” *The Sydney Morning Herald*. October 14. Available at: <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/v-for-vague-occupy-sydneys-faceless-leaders-20111014-1loy6.html>.

*V for Vendetta* Wikipedia page: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/V\\_for\\_Vendetta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/V_for_Vendetta).

**Week 3: The Human Rights to Water and a Safe, Clean Environment**

*Turning now to the relationship between human beings and the environment, we view and discuss films that critically examine the consumption of natural resources, including the extractive energy industry. Tapped examines the role of bottled water in threatening the human rights to both water and a safe, clean environment. Crude depicts the social, political, and environmental impact of the modern dependence on fossil fuels and provides us with the opportunity to ask: are these human rights issues?*

**June 16: Film:** *Tapped* (2009)

**Reading:** BBC News. 2004. “Coke Recalls Controversial Water.” March 19. Available at:  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/3550063.stm>.

Lohan, Tara. 2007. “Rural Communities Exploited by Nestle for Your Bottled Water.”  
 AlterNet May 30. Available at:  
<http://www.alternet.org/environment/52526/?page=entire>.

*Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation vs. Nestle Waters North America*.

Pacific Institute for Studies in Development, Environment, and Security. 2006. “Bottled Water Recalls, Field Corrections, Violations [As of July 24, 2006]”  
[http://www.pacinst.org/topics/water\\_and\\_sustainability/bottled\\_water/bottled\\_water\\_recalls\\_summary\\_table.pdf](http://www.pacinst.org/topics/water_and_sustainability/bottled_water/bottled_water_recalls_summary_table.pdf)

U.S. Food and Drug Administration. 2011. “Bottled Water Recall: Recalled Lots Include Water Distributed During Recovery Effort in Clinton.” May 4.  
<http://www.fda.gov/Safety/Recalls/ucm254580.htm>

**June 18: Film:** *Crude* (2009)

**Reading:** Hiskes, Richard P. 2006. “Environmental Human Rights and Intergenerational Justice.” *Human Rights Review* 7(3): 81-95.

Folkenflick, David. 2010. “A ‘Crude’ Awakening: Chevron vs. the Documentarian.”  
 NPR. June 4. Available at:  
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=127410188>.

Chanan, Michael. 2007. “Truth Games.” In *The Politics of Documentary*, Michael Chanan. Trowbridge, Wiltshire, UK: British Film Institute, 166-83.

**June 20: Film:** *The Age of Stupid* (2009)

**Reading:** United Nations. n.d. “Human Rights and Climate Change.” Available at:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/HRAndClimateChange/Pages/HRClimateChangeIndex.aspx>.

Human Rights Council. “Resolution 7/23 Human Rights and Climate Change.” *United Nations*. Available at:

[http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/E/HRC/resolutions/A\\_HRC\\_RES\\_7\\_23.pdf](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/E/HRC/resolutions/A_HRC_RES_7_23.pdf).

Letman, John. 2013. “How Climate Change Destroys Human Rights: Environmental Destruction Caused by People is Poised to Become the ‘Most Massive Human Rights Violation Ever.’” *Aljazeera*. December 19. Available at:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/humanrights/2013/12/how-climate-change-destroys-human-rights-20131217174532837148.html>.

#### **Week 4: Economic Rights and the Global Capitalist System**

*With the theme of economic rights, this week we turn from a focus on “good guys” and “bad guys” to the deeper, structural problems that underlay the global system. These films attempt to depict the complicated consequences of global capitalism, while eschewing easy solutions. We see in these films how not just individual actors, but entire systems can lead to massive human rights violations.*

**June 23: Film:** *Darwin’s Nightmare* (2005)

**Reading:** Pogge, Thomas. 2005. “Recognized and Violated by International Law: The Human Rights of the Global Poor.” *Leiden Journal of International Law*. 18(4): 717-45.

Chilton, Mariana, and Donald Rose. 2009. “A Rights-Based Approach to Food Insecurity in the United States.” *American Journal of Public Health* 99.7: 1203-11.

Lappé, Frances Moore. 2009. “The City that Ended Hunger.” *Yes!*. February 13.

Available at: <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/food-for-everyone/the-city-that-ended-hunger>.

Nichols, Bill. 2010. “Why are Ethical Issues Central to Documentary Filmmaking?” In *Introduction to Documentary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 42-66.

**June 25: Film:** *Life & Debt* (2003) and *Poverty in Rural America* (1965, U.S. Department of Agriculture)

**Reading:** Godmilow, Jill, and Ann-Louise Shapiro. 1997. “How Real is the Reality in Documentary Film?” *History and Theory*. 36.4: 80-101.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2505576>

UNICEF. 2010. “The Children Left Behind: A League Table of Inequality in Child Well-Being in the World’s Rich countries.” [http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/rc9\\_eng.pdf](http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/rc9_eng.pdf)

**June 27: Film:** *Bamako* (2006)

**Reading:** United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the World Health Organization. 2008. “Human Rights, Health and Poverty Reduction Strategies” Sections 1 & 2

[http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/HHR\\_PovertyReductionsStrategies\\_WHO\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/HHR_PovertyReductionsStrategies_WHO_EN.pdf)

**Week 5: Moving Forward?**

*In this last week we investigate a film that confronts the question of what to do in the aftermath of massive human rights violations, specifically the genocide in Cambodia. This film provides us with a final opportunity to discuss both the question of justice vs. forgiveness, and the role that film and other forms of media can play in reconciling broken societies.*

**June 30: Film:** *Enemies of the People* (2010)

**Reading:** Brudholm, Thomas. 2011. "Picturing Forgiveness after Atrocity." *Studies in Christian Ethics*. 24(2): 159-70.

*World Without Genocide*. n.d. "Cambodian Genocide, 1975-1978." Available at:

<http://worldwithoutgenocide.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/Cambodian-Genocide-World-Without-Genocide.pdf>.

Cambodia Tribunal Monitor. n.d. "Khmer Rouge History." Available at:

<http://www.cambodiatribunal.org/history/cambodian-history/khmer-rouge-history/>.

**July 2: Final Film (not announced in advance)**

**Reading:** No readings for today.