

Topics in Public Policy: Nutrition Rights

POLS 675c
Fall 2001

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Purpose

The purpose of *POLS 675c: Topics in Public Policy: Nutrition Rights* is to study the working of human rights systems through close examination of the human right to food and nutrition.

Over the last half-century, human rights advocates have emphasized civil and political rights, but work on economic and social rights is now developing rapidly. The human right to adequate food and nutrition, in particular, is being clarified under an initiative led by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and many agencies at both national and global levels are recognizing the right and working to assure its realization. This course examines the meaning and the application of the human right to adequate food and nutrition.

Participants should gain an understanding of recent developments in nutrition rights, and also develop skill in applying the nutrition rights approach in specific contexts. Goals include:

Learning about . . .

- the nature of rights systems generally;
- the content and character of the international human rights system, in the framework of international law;
- the historical foundations of the human right to food and nutrition;
- the meaning of the human right to food and nutrition as it has been clarified since the World Food Summit of 1996;
- the application of the nutrition rights approach in various contexts, e.g., in specific countries, and in relation to refugees, infants, drinking water, prisons, etc.

And, with these foundations, *building skills in . . .*

- analyzing concrete situations to identify violations of the human right to food and nutrition;
- formulating proposals for policy and legislation that would operationalize the realization of the human right to food and nutrition in specific contexts.

Pedagogy

This is an on-line course, using the Yahoo groups software. After the instructor receives your email address and tells egroups.com that you are to be admitted, you will be able to access the web site (or "home page") for the course, at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pols675c> As a participant in this course, you will need to check the website and/or your email every few days. You will want to create a shortcut for this URL (Universal Resource Locator) on your computer desktop. If you are likely to

be participating in the course from several different computers, you could put the shortcut onto a diskette.

The core text for the course is a tutorial prepared by the instructor, *Nutrition Rights: The Human Right to Adequate Food and Nutrition*. It may be accessed at: <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~kent/tutorial2000/titlepage.htm>. The last two sections in the tutorial, *Sources* and *Bibliography*, provide leads to many publications and websites that provide useful information on human rights and related issues. The most important single website on human rights is that of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, at www.unhchr.ch

This course is based on the idea that one learns best not from simply reading or listening to lectures, but by becoming actively engaged through discussion of the issues that are being studied. Discussions will take place through emails and through chats.

Email discussions may take place through the course's home page or through email exchanges outside of egroups. Messages may be sent from the home page by clicking on "Post", or by replying to another message at the web page. Alternatively, messages may be sent in by email. Messages that are sent through the home page are kept in an archive, a file of past messages that is always available at the home page.

Messages in the website's archive may be read either in chronological order or in a "threaded" presentation. In a threaded presentation, all messages that are responses to the same initial message are presented in sequence, thus holding together the "thread" of that discussion. In the threaded format, if you had responded to someone's earlier message, your message would be listed with the same subject name, and it would be presented just below the messages to which you are responding. This provides a nice means for following the "thread" of the past discussion on any particular topic. If you write a message with a new subject heading, that will start an entirely new thread.

Chat discussions will augment the email discussions. Unlike email discussions, which allow participants to read and respond to their email at their own convenience, chats require all who participate to be at their computers at the same time. The Chat function is accessed through the course's home page. We will try to Chat for about one hour each week, in a time slot that is convenient to all participants.

These email and chat discussions are intended to provide a space to help participants explore the course materials and any relevant issues of interest. Active engagement by all will help us to create a virtual community of learners, one in which all course participants are deeply engaged in the process of learning. As indicated in the section below on *Course Requirements*, participants are required to write reports on the discussions.

Schedule

The reading sequence alternates between chapters on more conceptual issues, in Chapters I through IX of the tutorial, and the applications, in Sections X-a through X-g of Chapter X, on *Applications*. The purpose of this alternation is to develop a steady counterpoint between theory and practice.

This course begins on August 27, 2001 and ends on December 17, 2001. A detailed schedule for the course will be provided later.

Course Requirements

Participants' major responsibilities in this course are to:

- Keep up with the readings, as scheduled,
- Participate actively in discussions, and
- Submit assignments, as scheduled.

Assignment A. Autobiography, the first assignment, is to upload a brief autobiography on the course website. The purpose here is twofold: first, to make sure you know how to upload, and second, to share information about your background and interests with the rest of the class. Your autobiography should include information such as your schooling, your current employment and/or activities, where you are living currently, etc. Please be sure to indicate the one email address you will use throughout this course. If you are willing to share your telephone number, please provide that as well. Two or three pages would be sufficient.

Assignments B, C, D, E, G, H, and I. Discussion Reports are your reports of work done since the prior report. The main focus is on the discussion that has taken place, but this is a good place to raise other matters as well, including comments and questions you may have about the readings, your term project, and other concerns you may have. Your reviews of the discussions should not only report on what was discussed, but also offer your reflections on the issues. These reports will probably run about three pages each.

Assignments F and J are on your *term project*. This project is to be a research-based study on the application of the the human rights approach to improving the food and nutrition situation in some particular context. Assignment F is a draft, and Assignment J is the final version. The task is to formulate suggestions for improved policy or law with regard to the human right to food and nutrition. Participants may choose to focus on a particular country, program, or agency. Some might choose to expand on one of the themes addressed in Chapter X of the tutorial. Some might want to focus on a special situation, such as the right to drinking water in Botswana, or the ways in which nutrition rights could be effectively recognized and realized in a selected refugee camp. Some participants might want to look at prospects for strengthening nutrition rights in their own communities (e.g., Hawaii), or in a specific nutrition-related program such as, say, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infants, and Children (commonly known as WIC) in the United States. In general, participants are advised to focus on situations they know or can readily learn about.

All of these assignments must be uploaded by the procedure that will be specified. All submissions must include:

- An informative title
- Your name
- Assignment identification
- Date
- Footnotes citing sources of specific information, where appropriate
- Bibliography, where appropriate
- Page numbers (if more than 2 pages long)

Also, all submissions should be spell checked.

Assessment

There are ten assignments, all of equal weight. Each assignment will be graded on a ten point scale. Participation will be counted as well.

All assignments must be submitted by the dates on which they are due. Work that is late, by up to one week maximum, will have the grade reduced by ten percent of the maximum possible grade. Work that is more than one week late will not be accepted, except by prior arrangement with the instructor.

Registration

Full-time students at the University of Hawaii at Manoa may register through Pa'ae, following their usual registration procedures.

Individuals who are not registered as full-time students at the University of Hawaii at Manoa can register for this course through the university's Outreach College, through its website at <http://www.aln.hawaii.edu>. The tuition and registration fee for students who register through Outreach College add up to \$519 for both Hawaii residents and non-residents.

Additional information about this course may be obtained from Professor Kent at kent@hawaii.edu

This is the syllabus for Political Science 675c, version of February 22, 2001. The latest version is available at <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~kent/pols675cfall2001syllabus.doc>.