

IS 319: Ethics and Qualitative Methods of Human Rights Work

Wednesday 530-930pm (2510)

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Office Hours: Thursday 430-6pm or by appointment

Room 7274 (please call if door is locked)

Course rationale:

University courses addressing various human rights issues have grown exponentially in the undergraduate and graduate level over the past 20 years. Most of these courses focus on specific issues and many programs require fieldwork and/or internships. But although there are a growing number of content-based courses there is a dearth of material focusing on *how* to do human rights work, work that often has significant political and social implications and operates in contexts with significant power differences and consequences.

I have taught human rights for 15 years, and previously I coordinated the Human Rights Internship program at the University of Chicago. I also served as the Career Advisor for students exploring and applying for positions in public and non-profit positions. In these various positions over the years I noticed patterns within student development. There is the “savior complex” but there is also the “cultural differences” mindset; both extremes can prove damaging. There is also often the “white guilt complex” (which does not mean the student need be ethnically white but rather having cultural/economic privilege that often comes from the global North), which sometimes propels students to act more forcibly or feel they cannot act at all. This of course presumes one is doing work outside of a community in which they identify; there are also specific considerations when one is doing human rights work in their “own” community.

Both working within ones’ community or outside, there is often an element of shock and discomfort that occurs when a student is engaged in fieldwork. A student can become paralyzed when confronted by their own positionality. At times there is anger when the student’s desire “to help” is ignored, or is manipulated, or seen as an intrusion. So the question remains: How can a person do *good* human rights work (research and practical and all the in-betweens)? What kinds of ethical considerations need to be thought through beforehand, during and after? Is there actually a beginning, middle and end to human rights work? What is the role of academic work and practical work?

As Indigenous scholarship has taught us, good research must be evaluated on the basis of respect, reciprocity, relevance and responsibility by questioning the supposed divide between content and method and rather recognizing the ethics that are involved in *doing* such work and how this informs the content. I aim to work towards developing a conversation of the *methods* of human rights academic and applied academic work. In this way one can develop best practices as well note concerns in current practice.

Specific skills that will be addressed:

- How do we select a research interest?
- How do we locate ourselves in the work?
- What are the ethics in generating a research question?
- How do we determine appropriate methodologies?
- How can we inform ourselves on the larger socio-cultural, political, economic and technological contexts?
- Who do we go to for background information and how do we filter through their own perspectives?
- What are the politics of locating archival and policy material, particularly when the issue may be political/culturally/socially sensitive?
- How do we think through issues of communication in terms of: language, jargon, sensitive terminology (i.e.: who is defining and using the term “human rights” here?).
- What are the ethics of using informants/fixers?
- How do we determine the legitimacy of particular NGOs or other organization? How do we identify sources and recognizing their role in the issue?
- What is the role of money and funding – both of the organizations as well in supporting us in our own work?
- What are some ins and outs of fieldwork i.e.: interviewing strategies, money, safety, going “home”.
- And lastly, how should we share/disseminating findings in a way that can be useful?

Again, these are research questions that all good researchers should be thinking through but it becomes particularly heightened in human rights work.

Ideal student population: This course is particularly useful to students planning to engage in a cumulative academic work (i.e.: a honours thesis) that involves fieldwork and/or thinking to engage in a future career in human rights, humanitarian and development work that will involve fieldwork.

Means of Evaluation: Students are evaluated in both group and individual work .

- Each student will identify a piece of individual work they would like to engage with throughout the semester. It could be an ethics proposal, a proposed project to apply for graduate school, the method section of their honours thesis, a project for an NGO or even an investigative journalism piece. This will be a piece that will help ground them throughout the semester as they engage in more theoretical readings/work. **You will email me your personal goal by January 27th.**
 - **SWOT analysis and concerns (March 2nd) – 25 points**
 - **Final personal project (March 30th) - 75 points**

- Each student will work in a small group to identify a human rights issue they want to engage with, identify stake holders and engage with them to draft a grant proposal in a collaborative, respectful, critical and effective fashion. In that way students will be engaged in doing various forms of inquiry including, but not limited to: interviewing, content analysis and coding, participant observation and knowledge dissemination. All of these smaller components will build off of each other thus students will be engaged in workshoping and learn how to give constructive peer feedback and evaluation.
 - **Fieldnotes 1 (February 15) – 15 points**
 - **Fieldnotes 2 –(March 21) 15 points**
 - **Draft proposal (February 24th) - 50 points (graded with your team)**
 - **Interview and code book (March 16th) - 25 points**
 - **Presentation of grant (April 6th) - 75 points (graded with your team)**

- Using the skills acquired throughout the course you will provide a critical analysis of the ethics and methods employed in filming and distributing “A Sinner in Mecca” (think of a “A Sinner in Mecca” as a human rights project.) This is a 5-7 page analysis.
 - **April 6th. TOTAL: 50 POINTS**

- Leading a class discussion on a reading (you will sign up for the reading during the second class):
 - **20 points**

- You are responsible for posting a reflection, and a discussion question, on at least one of the readings per week. The reflection should include direct reference to the text but should NOT be a summary, rather it should bring out some questions/concerns/thoughts. Please feel free to make comparisons/discussion with other texts but you are not required to do so. These posts are due at 11:59am on Tuesdays. Questions may be used for in class exercises.
 - **Each post = 5 points/10 posts**
 - **TOTAL: 50 points**

TOTAL POINTS FOR CLASS: 400 POINTS

Up to 20 points extra credit is available based on instructor's discretion All extra credit due by March 30TH – NO EXCEPTIONS (posted in personal project)

Grading:

- A = 100%-93%
- A - = 92%-90%
- B+ = 89-88%
- B = 87%-83%
- B- = 82%-80%
- C+ = 79%-78%
- C = 77% - 73%
- C- = 72%-70%
- D = 69% - 60%
- F = 59% or lower

Attendance Policy: We have very few class meetings thus attendance at all classes, including all films and guest lectures, is *mandatory*. Students are expected to attend **all** classes and read the assignments so as to be prepared for class discussion. Experience shows that there is a direct relation between attendance and performance in the course; I will deduct five points for every unexcused absence.

An excused absence means you contact the instructor, me, prior to your absence (barring an emergency and then you contact me as soon as possible) and I confirm your absence. You can reach me via email or phone. You are responsible for any class work or homework we go over or that is due during your absence.

Participation: Active involvement in this course is imperative. We will be discussing many volatile issues, and it is vital that students do the assigned readings before the class, as well as be prepared to talk intelligently about it with others.

Plagiarism: All work you submit must be your own original work. Plagiarism (submitting work that is not your own, including paraphrasing of sources that are not acknowledged or properly cited) will result in **automatic failure**, and may result in additional disciplinary action by the University.

Required Texts:

Armbruster, Heidi & Laerke, Anna (2008). *Taking sides: Ethics, politics and fieldwork in anthropology*. New York, NY: Berghan Books.

Klotz, A. and Prakash, D. *Qualitative methods in international relations*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples*. London, UK: Zed Books.

Wilson, Shawn (2008) *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

This text is available online through SFU Library as an e-book but there will also be hard copies available at the bookstore for purchase:

Nagar, Richa (2014) *Muddying the waters : coauthoring feminisms across scholarship and activism*. Chicago, University of Illinois Press.

The following readings will be available online and/or distributed:

- Ahmand, Asad. (March 2, 2015) "A Note on Cal-out Culture" *Briarpatch Magazine*
<http://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/a-note-on-call-out-culture>
- Carpenter, C. (2009) , "Children Born of Wartime Rape," in *The International Struggle for New Human Rights*
- Charli Carpenter (2012). "You Talk Of Terrible Things So Matter-of-Factly in This Language of Science": Constructing Human Rights in the Academy. *Perspectives on Politics*, 10, pp 363-383. doi:10.1017/S1537592712000710.
- Ethics of International Engagement and International Service (2011)
http://ethicsofisl.ubc.ca/downloads/_2011-EIESL-kit-loRes.pdf
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(2), 219–245. doi:10.1177/1077800405284363
- Hafner-Burton, E. and Ron, J. 2009. 'Seeing double: Human rights impact through qualitative and quantitative eyes.' *World Politics*, (61)2: 360-401.
- Hannerz, U. (2003). Being there...and there...and there! Reflections on multi-site ethnography. *Ethnography*, 4(2), 201–216. doi:10.1177/14661381030042003
- Hill Collins, P. (1986/2008). Learning from the outsider within: The sociological significance of Black feminist thought. In A. Jaggar (Ed.), *Just methods: An interdisciplinary feminist reader* (pp. 308–320). Boulder, CO: Paradigm.
- Smith, Andrea (2007), "Introduction" *The Revolution will not be Funded*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press
- Kaarbo, J., & Beasley, R. (1999). A practical guide to the comparative case study method in political psychology. *Political Psychology*, 20(2), 369–391.
- Lawrence, S., & Dobson, C. (2013) *Advancing human rights: The state of global foundation grantmaking*. New York, NY: The Foundation Center and the International Human Rights Funders Group.
- Pruce, Joel (2015) "The Practice Turn in Human Rights Research", in *The Social Practice of Human Rights*, New York, NY: Palgrave:Macmillian
- Smith, L. T. (2005). On tricky ground: Researching the Native in the age of uncertainty. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 217–234).
- Stake, R. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis*. New York, NY: Guilford Press. (we will be using the first three chapters)
- Sylvester, Christine (2000). Development Poetics. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*. Vol 25, No 3, pp. 335-451. <http://jstor.org.stable/40644956>

We will also be reading various articles (i.e.: [Katelyn Verstraten's piece in the Tyee](#)), looking at the Reporting In Indigenous Communities guidebook, the [Community Research Guidelines](#) put out by the Sexworkers Coalition in Vancouver, watching various films including: *Stanford Prison Experiment* (or the recent remake "Experiment"); *The Ambassador*, *The Act of Killing* and [other relevant multimedia work](#) that can help explore the complexity of ethics.

Syllabus is subject to change on based on the needs of the class and the assessment of the instructor.

JANUARY 6 – The relationship between method/content/knowledge

- Syllabus
- Expectations
- What is method?
- Research as process?
- Recipe

Homework: Anna Leander's piece "Thinking Tools"(Chapter 2) in Klotz & Prakash Chapter 1 and 2 in Shawn Wilson's *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* Apply this to your recipe for the class – due 11:59am on January 11th online!

January 13 – Human rights as a field? A discipline? A practice?

- What are human rights?
- Human rights violations?
- Activism in the academy – tensions surrounding studying about and/or doing human rights work
- Deconstructing Joel Pruce's speech

Homework: Hafner-Burton & Ron

Joel Pruce (2014), "The Practice Turn in Human Rights Research' in *The Social Practice of Human Rights*
Charli Carpenter, "You talk of terrible things so matter-a-factly"

JANUARY 20 – How do we see, or not see, "a problem?"

- Positionality within a field
- Gatekeepers
- SWOT analysis
- Deficit/Asset thinking
- Problematizing objectivity (introduction to outsider within)

- Read Katelyn Verstraten's piece

Homework: Hill-Collins

Sylvester

Chapter 3 in Wilson

MUST MEET WITH BY JANUARY 27 TO IDENTIFY A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE YOU WISH TO ENGAGE WITH AND ALSO IDENTIFY YOUR INDIVIDUAL METHODS PROJECT

JANUARY 27 – The Real politick of what makes a human rights issue sexy

- Human rights industry
- Role of funders
- Relationship between funders and knowledge – follow the money – using your topics
- Human Rights Foundation material
- Watching "Stanford Prison Experiment"

Homework: Carpenter (2009) in Bob

Chapter 1 of *The Revolution will not be funded*

Intro to *Taking Sides: Ethics Politics and Fieldwork in Anthropology*
Chapter 4 of Nagar

MAKE INITIAL CONTACT WITH AN ORGANIZATION/ADVOCATE

FEBRUARY 3 – The ethics of research – and research questions

- Respect
- Reciprocity
- Relevance
- Responsibility
- Applying the four R's to the human rights issue you will be working on
- GUEST SPEAKER DR. AMY PARENT

Homework: Chapters 1-6 in *Decolonizing Methodologies* (2012 edition)
Nagar Intro and Chapter 1

Atay, Tayfun, "Arriving in Nowhere Land: Studying an Islamic Sufi Order in London" (Chapter 2) in *Taking Sides*

Submit fieldnotes 1 via email by Feb 15th

Extra credit: Watch *The Act of Killing*

FEBRUARY 10 – reading week

FEBRUARY 17 – What is a case? The importance of context in understanding cases

- What questions re you trying to answer?
- Map exercise
- Understanding "marginalized" and "vulnerable" groups
- Tri Council Guidelines
- GUEST SPEAKER: SUSAN DAVIS

Homework: Flyvbjerg

Audie Klotz's "Case Selection" (Chapter 4) in Klotz & Prakesh

Karboo & Beasley

Stake Preface and Chapter 1

Submit draft grant proposal

FEBRUARY 24 – Comparative Case Study and Multiple Case Study

- In class exercise of applying the concept of "case" "comparative case" or "multiple case" to your INDIVIDUAL issue of interest
- SWOT analysis of your individual issue

Homework: Hugh Gusterson, "Ethnographic Research" (Chapter 7) in Klotz & Parkesh
Haanerz

Stake Chapter 2 and 3

Submit SWOT and ethical concerns

MARCH 2ND - What is "the field"

- Traditional understandings of the field: reified, confined, static, external

- Fieldnotes
- Role of relationships – does “the field” ever end?
- The ethics of difficulty of “multi cited ethnography” as well as participatory action research
- Problematizing – what happens when you are part of” the field” (revisiting Hill Collins, Linda Smith)
- Screening “The Ambassador”

Homework: Smith (2005) “On Tricky Ground”

Nayanika Mookherjee, “Friendships and Encounters on the Political Left in Bangladesh” (Chapter 3) in *Taking Sides*

Iver Neumann’s “Discourse Analysis” (Chapter 5) in Klotz & Parkesh
Stake Chapter 2 and 3

MUST MEET WITH ME BY MARCH 7TH TO GET FEEDBACK ON PROPOSAL

MARCH 9 – Coding and Analyzing!

- Read “Call out culture” and make codes from text
- Design interview questions from codes
- Regroup and review

Homework: Mary Hermann, “Content Analysis” (Chapter 10) in Klotz & Parkesh

Laerke, Anna, “Confessions of a Downbeat Anthropologist” (Chapter 6), Heike Schamberg, “Taking sides in the Oilfields: For a politically engaged anthropology.” (Chapter 8) and Jonathan Neale, “Ranting and Silence: The Contradictions of Writing for Activists and Academics (Chapter 9) in *Taking Sides*

Community-based Participatory Research: A Guide to Ethical Principles and Practices and Ethical Challenges Appendices (posted) but feel free to explore case studies at
www.dur.ac.uk/beacon/socialjustice/researchprojects/cbpr

Submit interview and “code book” for your individual interview

MARCH 16 – “member checking” AKA making sure you heard what they said, said what you heard, and represent it in away that works for all

- **NOTE: THERE IS NO CLASS THIS DAY** Use this time to share your grant (with feedback incorporated) to the organization/advocate and listen to feedback

Homework: Submit fieldnotes 2 via email by March 21

Chapters 11-12 in *Decolonizing Methodologies*

Finish Wilson

MARCH 23 - The politics of research and the research of politics

- Ensuring the information is useful to the community
- Speaking to the academic community/Alternative means of dissemination
- Use of non-written forms of dissemination
- Foreseeing and preparing for backlash

Homework: Panagiotos Geros, “Doing Fieldwork within Fear and Silences” (Chapter 4) and, “We will not Integrate!” (Chapter 7)

Submit final piece of INDIVIDUAL work

MARCH 30 – Screening of “A Sinner in Mecca” at SFU Woodward

November 2015

Homework: Write a 5-7 page reflective piece on the Methods and Ethics of “A Sinner in Mecca” focus on notions of positionality, the context in which the film was created, the goal, the use of provocation, the means of dissemination. The actors and stakeholders and risks. Be sure to use the texts and ideas we have learned in the course

Submit your final piece of individual work

APRIL 6 – OPEN FORUM FOR GRANT PITCHES