

SYLLABUS FOR JANUARY 317: ARE WE RIGHT ABOUT RIGHTS?

Instructors: James Keller (Philosophy) and Nancy Williams (Philosophy)

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Class meeting times: 10:00-about 12:00; about 1:00-about 3:00 Monday through Thursday

Texts:

The Human Rights Reader, 2d ed.; ed. Micheline R. Ishay

Moral Relativism, James Kellenberger

Basis of grading:

Daily comments in writing—40%

Class participation—30%

Final paper—30%

You must pass every part to pass the interim. *Note: The minimal passing grade is a C, not a D.*

The assignments: As you will see, we are requiring genuine effort in class and in preparing for class. In return for requiring this effort, we are not scheduling any classes on Friday. We expect you to conscientiously complete the assignments and to attend and participate in every class.

Class sessions: There will be two sessions each day Monday through Thursday. In general, the morning sessions will be devoted to discussing the reading assigned for that day and the video from the most recent afternoon session. You will be asked to bring with you to class (1) two copies of a brief written comment on the day's assigned reading and (2) two copies of another brief comment on the video to be discussed that morning. Both comments must be prepared on a word processor. One copy of each comment will be turned in to the instructors at the beginning of class in the morning; you will keep the other copies to use in discussions that morning.

In the morning sessions we will typically break into small groups for discussion of your comments on the materials; then we will reconvene the whole class to share and discuss the results of the small-group discussions. In the afternoons we will watch a video, but the class will not discuss the video at that time. We instructors want you to think about and reflect on the video before we discuss it. However, we will permit questions for clarification of matters in the video right after the video ends.

Class attendance: We believe that class attendance is very important in this interim project. Therefore, we have a very strict attendance policy. Students enrolled in this project will be permitted no more than one unexcused absence. Students with more than one unexcused absence will be dropped from the course. Please note that the morning and afternoon sessions on each day are considered to be two classes; missing both of them without a legitimate excuse would be two unexcused absences. Students who claim to have an excused absence may be asked to provide

evidence to support their excuse—e.g., a note from the infirmary or a doctor’s office if a student claims illness. If you know in advance that you will miss a class, you should tell one of us and make sure that the reason is a legitimate excuse. Important note: oversleeping, failure of the alarm to go off, and similar reasons for missing a class are not legitimate excuses. Get a reliable alarm clock (or more than one if necessary), so that you do not miss a class for this sort of reason. If need be, set up a “buddy system” in which you and someone else check on each other in the morning.

Written work: This interim project aims not only at informing you about the topic of human and animal rights, but also at helping you to think through your own beliefs about these rights and at coming to as much of a consensus as we can about what rights they have. All of the readings will contribute something to achieving these goals. Each day the written work assigned will ask you to reflect on and summarize what you think the reading contributes to deciding what rights humans and animals should have. In small groups you will discuss your conclusions, and in the class as a whole we will work toward a consensus on human and animal rights. We expect that it will not be possible to reach a complete consensus about what rights humans and animals have. Students who miss a morning class for whatever reason, excused or unexcused, must submit the required written work to the instructors. It is, however, impossible to make up missed discussion; this is one reason why we instructors have the strict attendance policy that we do. **Please keep your copy of all your written work for this interim until the interim is over. Your comments on the videos and reading assignments will probably help you recall them when we ask for your evaluation of the materials used in the interim project.**

The videos: The afternoon videos provide examples of and/or dramatizations of and/or further information on some of the conflicts over human rights that we will be discussing. Students who miss a video for any reason, excused or unexcused, must rent and watch the video outside class, must submit the required written work to the instructors, and must take an oral quiz on the contents of the video to demonstrate their familiarity with the video. Because the videos will be viewed in a darkened room, some students may find themselves getting sleepy. If you find this happening to you, please get up, walk around *briefly* outside the classroom, and do whatever is necessary to fend off the sleepiness. You do not have to ask permission to leave the room for this purpose or to visit the rest room; just get up and leave the room. Students who sleep through significant portions of a video will be considered to have missed it and will be required to take an oral quiz on the content of the video.

Class participation: We instructors want everyone to take part in discussions in small groups and in the class as a whole. We will take note of the quality of your participation each day; that will constitute a part of your overall grade in the interim project. Your daily class participation grade will be posted in Moodle later that day. If you believe that this grade does not correctly reflect the quality of your work that day, you **must** send the instructors an email indicating that belief and the reasons for it by noon the following day; otherwise no changes will be made in the grade.

Final paper: Each student must write a final paper of about 5-6 pages. Specific requirements for the paper will be distributed shortly before the paper is due.

Interim evaluation: We will conduct an evaluation of this interim project on the last day of the interim.

Paper Guidelines

Unless you are given a specific assignment in relation to a particular video, for each video you are to do the following: select at least 3 events or characters in the video that you think raise important points about human rights (or animal rights when applicable). Briefly describe these events and characters, and tell what points you think they raised about human or animal rights. The events and characters might be doing or saying something that illustrates an important human or animal right or that opposes an important human or animal right. Be sure you make it clear what human or animal right is involved and how the events or characters relate to it. In general you should expect to write at least a page (250 words) for each video. If you are moved to write something longer, that is fine. You should bring 2 copies of your comments to class with you. One will be given to the instructors; you should keep the other to refer to in our discussion of the video.

There will be specific questions given for each of the readings. You should plan to write at least one page (250 words) in answer to the questions. Your answer must contain at least three references to the reading assigned for that day. You must bring 2 copies of your answer to class with you. One will be given to the instructors; you should keep the other to refer to in our discussion of the video.

General directions for all papers: All papers must be prepared on a word processor. They must be double-spaced with one-inch margins on all sides and with 12-point Times New Roman font. Your name should be at the top left of the paper, and on the next line under it should be the assignment, either the date of the reading or the title of the video. (See example below.) The papers should show serious thought about the reading or video, they should conform to good mechanics of writing, and they should be proofread. Papers that are late without a legitimate reason will incur a grade penalty.

James Keller
Assignment for 1/7

Nancy Williams
Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee

Reading and Video Schedule

1/7 UNUDHR. Video: Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee

Topic: The Liberal Vision: First-Generation Rights

1/8 Locke on Human Rights.

Video: Rendition

1/11 Freedom from unjust punishment and from torture (Section 5.8, chs. 2 & 16; Posner, Section 14.6 and Dershowitz, Section 14.7)

Video: Amistad

Topic: Property Rights

1/12 Introduction, p.113, A classic statement (Locke, Section 5.11), Limits on one's rights to property (de Robespierre, Section 5.13).

Video: Matewan

Topic: Second-Generation Rights

1/13 Introduction, pp.197-98. The Power to Exercise One's Rights (Blanc, Section 8.7) More Humane Working Conditions (Marx, Sections 8.8 and 8.9) Education (Marx, Section 8.10) Women and Socialism (Bebel, Section 10.4) Balancing First- and Second-Generation Rights (Lukes, Section 13.4)

Video: Dying to Leave

1/14 Economic Rights and Human Rights (Friedman, Section 12.1) and Human Rights and Workers' Rights (Amnesty International, Section 12.3). Video: Gandhi

Topic: Achieving Human Rights in International Relations

1/18 Kymlicka "The Good, the Bad, and the Intolerable: Minority Group Rights" (Section 13.9). Ishay (Section 14.11)

Video: Out of the Past: The Struggle for Gay/Lesbian Rights

Topic: The Conflict between Individual Rights and Group Rights: Gay Rights as Test Case

1/19 Read Section 13.11 (Stychin, "Same-Sex Sexualities and the Globalization of Human Rights Discourse") and "Millian Arguments for Gay Rights" (posted in Moodle).

Video: Death on a Factory Farm

Topic: Animal and Environmental Rights

1/20 Read: Descartes "Animals are Machines," Kant, "Duties in Regard to Animals," and Cavalieri "Are Human Rights Human?"

Video: When Animals Talk

1/21 Read: Frey, "The Case against Animal Rights," White, "Why Animals Cannot Have Rights."

Video: Lolita

1/25 Read: Regan, Human and Animal Rights (excerpt from *Empty Cages*)

Video: Poisoned Waters

1/26 Read: Stone, "Should Trees Have Standing?"

Video: The Day I Will Never Forget

1/27 "Female Circumcision/Genital Mutilation and Ethical Relativism" in Moodle

Topic: Moral Relativism

1/28 *Moral Relativism*, chs. 1-2

Video: Anna and the King

2/1 *Moral Relativism*, chs. 3-4

2/2 *Moral Relativism*, chs. 5-6