Human Rights Advocacy
CONF 399 – A03 & CONF 695 - A03
The School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution
George Mason University
Douglas Irvin-Erickson  dirviner@gmu.edu
Time: 4:30 pm - 7:10 pm    MWF
Arlington: Founders Hall 470
May 20, 2019 - Jun 22, 2019

This seminar considers major issues in contemporary international human rights advocacy. Students will gain an understanding of the history of the human rights movement, and contemporary human rights standards and their implementation and enforcement through international, regional, and national institutions and by non-governmental organizations. The seminar will evaluate human rights advocacy tools and strategies applied in current political and social contexts and through case studies. We will examine the role of institutions and non-governmental organizations in upholding, advocating or failing to uphold international human rights standards. Topics will include the challenges and opportunities presented to human rights advocates by: global social movements and contentious activism campaigns; international human rights and humanitarian law; and the challenge of meeting economic and social rights in free-market economies and developing countries.

Reading List:
Week 1 – Overview
May 20, 22. Read Micheline Ishay

May 24. Read Donnelly, First half
Presentation Group 1

Week 2 – History
May 27, 29. Read Rebecca Adami

May 31. Read Donelly, Second half
Presentation Group 2

Week 3 – Critique
June 3, 5. Read Makau Mutua

June 7. Read Samuel Moyn, focusing on Intro, Chapter 1, and final Chapter
Presentation Group 3

Week 4 – Research
June 10, 12. Read Sally Engle Merry

June 14. Read Destrooper and Merry, First Half.
Presentation Group 4

Week 5 – Research and Advocacy
June 17, 19. Read Austin Choi Fitzpatrick

June 21 Read Destrooper and Merry, Second Half.
Presentation Group 5

Presentation Assignment
Your group must:
• Lead the class in an intelligent conversation about the Friday practice readings;
• Present a current human rights issue that is being written about in scholarly journals from the list below; explain how and why it is a human rights issue; and explain how the issue should be addressed in light of the Friday readings.
• Discuss the pro’s and con’s of the Friday author’s approaches to human rights advocacy.

Journals: https://www.press.jhu.edu/journals/human-rights-quarterly plus these:
http://www.humanrightsmalta.org/journals-on-human-rights.html
Final Assignment:

- Due June 22, via blackboard.
- Ph.D. Students. Write an intelligent and original essay that analyzes 1 case study from the list below, in light of at least 3 books we read this semester. No outside citations are allowed. (5-7,000 words) (plus must seriously engage Sally Engle Merry’s book on research)
- M.S. Students. Write an intelligent and original essay that analyzes 1 case study from the list below, in light of at least 2 books we read this semester. No outside citations are allowed. (5-7,000 words)
- Undergrad Students. Write an intelligent and original essay that analyzes 1 case study from the list below, in light of at least 2 books we read this semester. No outside citations are allowed. (1,500-2,000 words)

Case Studies

North America


Southeast Asia


Africa & Middle East (and Islam)


**South America**


**The United Nations**

