Welcome to Literature and Human Rights

The first decade of the twenty-first century has been defined, on the one hand, by a strong global effort to promote Human Rights and "freedom." On the other hand, it has been a decade marked by grave Human Rights violations and new public debates over what it means to be human and have basic rights.

In this course, we will explore the cultural, ideological, and philosophical foundations of Human Rights, examining the ways authors of fiction have grappled with the evolution of these ideas through time and across societies. Tracing the genealogy of the concept of rights as well as the concept of a human being, we will look at how these concepts emerge in fiction. Each of the literary texts selected semester have attempted to render some of the most complex and vexing issues of their age, artistically.

Indeed, a central question to this course is what (if any?) is the relationship between art, literature, history, politics, and culture? We will examine the formal properties of the literature, focusing on the way literature's techniques of representation construct particular visions of human beings. Secondly, we will ask: How do authors negotiate the contradictions between the value of universal human equity and rights with the very real exploitation and exclusion of peoples based on race, class, gender, and cultural identity?

Reading List of Required Books


Note: It is very important to get these exact editions (identified by the ISBN number) because translations, paginations, and supplementary materials to the text vary.

- *Tum Teav* — This is an oral Cambodian version of a well know Hindu epic, written in Khmer by Botumthera Som. I'm working trying to secure a digital copy of this book for students. Hold off on purchasing it for the time being.
Grade breakdown

10%  Attendance
10%  First analytical essay (1,500 to 2,000 words)
10%  Second analytical essay (1,500 to 2,000 words)
20%  Weekly Quizzes
20%  Final Exam
30%  Final synthetic essay (8 to 10 pages; about 4,000 words)

Weekly Quizzes: The ten weekly quizzes are designed to make sure students are keeping up with reading the course literature. Weekly quizzes will not deal with the philosophical component of the class. Instead, weekly quizzes will be on only the literature and poetry of the course. Quizzes are numbered 1 through 10 on the syllabus. Three extra credit quizzes are numbered "0" on certain days. Two of these quiz grades will replace the two lowest quiz grades during the semester.

Analytical Essays: For the two analytical essays, students are encouraged to think freely and openly about their own thoughts and reactions to the readings. Each analytical essay must contain close textual readings of at least two pieces of literature on the syllabus and one of the philosophical readings from class. Students are, of course, allowed to reference more texts than these. Extended quotations and block quotes do not count towards the essay's word minimum!

Most importantly, these essays must contain a clear thesis in the first paragraph, and deal with a theme that cuts through each reading. Essays that are merely summaries of the readings will not receive more than a C, at best.

Final Synthetic Essay: Each student will write a comprehensive synthetic essay of 8 to 10 double-spaced pages. Essay topics can be either 1) a comparative close reading of more than two pieces of literature from the course that deal with major course themes, or 2) a close reading of one piece of literature from the course with a discussion on the philosophical pieces read in class. For option 2, students are encouraged to read and refer to the entire philosophical piece, not just the excerpts we read in class.

Because this is a synthetic essay and not a research paper, students will be limited to using only the books, articles, and websites that appear on this syllabus. The goal of this assignment is to allow students to synthesize the course material in a way that is meaningful and beneficial to them. And yes, final synthetic essays can be continuations of a short analytical essay.

Final essays must be writing in Chicago, Turabian, or MLA style.

These websites and books offer outstanding student writing help:
- Jack Lynch's Guide to Grammar
  http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Writing/
Final exam: The final exam is multiple choice with one essay question. Firstly, the exam will cover key course themes and test student's knowledge of key concepts. Secondly, the exam will include an identification component where students will be presented with significant passages from the course readings and asked to identify the author. Thirdly, students will be asked to explain in a short essay why two of those passages were important in the course.

Missing work rules: Any missing work will result in a course grade of Incomplete — even if you are missing one weekly response paper.

Late assignments: All late assignments will be penalized by one full letter grade for each week they are late. Should you need an extension on the final synthetic essay (i.e. for medical reasons), you must receive the professor's written permission in an e-mail (in case I forget that I gave you an extension).

Missed Quizzes and Exams: There are no make-ups for the quizzes, for any reason. The quizzes are intended to make sure students complete all readings for class. Exams can only be made up in the event of an emergency.

Attendance policy: In accordance with Rutgers University regulations, attendance is required at all regularly scheduled meetings. Having 3 unexcused absences is grounds for failure.

Cheating and plagiarism: No cheating will be tolerated. No plagiarism will be tolerated. Students who are found cheating and plagiarizing will be reported to the dean's office.

Outside resources for students looking to catch up on issues relating to human rights: Here are the news sources you may use. (If you want to use an alternative, confirm it with me first. The goal is to avoid the CNN/MSNBC style news reporting and engage more complex and detailed stories that can be found in leading newspapers and journals).

Academic Sources:
- hrncolumbia.org
- logosjournal.com
- www.press.jhu.edu/journals/human_rights_quarterly (Access free via RU computers)

Popular Media Sources:
- globalpost.com
- iht.com
- nytimes.com
- washingtonpost.com
- cfr.org
- hrw.org
- amnesty.org
- theatlantic.com
- trialwatch.org
- genocidewatch.org
The following are posted on blackboard. We will discuss several key elements from these texts from time to time throughout the semester:

- The Magna Carta
- The English Bill of Rights
- Declaration of Independence of the United States of America
- The Bill of Rights of the United States of America
- French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action
- Declaration on the Rights of National, Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities
- Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
- Draft Declaration of Principles on Human Rights and the Environment

Class Schedule

Key: 

Print the in-class readings from blackboard and bring them to class.

Bring the weekly reading to class.

Quiz #1, #2, etc., on weekly readings; Extra Credit Quiz

Paper Due

Due Dates:

Essay 1
Essay 2
Essay 3
Final Paper:
Final Exam: TBA

Week 1 — Ancient Voices: What are rights? Who gives us rights?

The first half of the class will draw on the first chapter of Ishay, "Early Ethical Contributions to Human Rights"

The second half of class will examine excerpts from the following:

1. Plato *The Republic*
2. Aristotle *Politics, Physics*
3. Al-Kindi, selections
4. Saadia Gaon, selections
5. Al-Ghazali, selections
7. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*
8. John Milton *Areopagitica*
10. Mo Tzu *Universal Love*
11. The Buddha *Foundation of the Kingdom of Righteousness*

Week 2 — European Enlightenment: What is a right? What is a human?

📖 **Read for this week:**
1. Selections from Dante's *Inferno* (on blackboard)
2. Selections Alexander Pope *Essay on Man* (on blackboard)
3. Ishay, Chapter 2 "Human Rights and the Enlightenment" pages 63-84
   • Focus on Ishay's argument on the relationship between Islamic & Hindu ideas and European Enlightenment thought.

⁉️ **In class readings:**
1. Selections from Immanuel Kant *Critique of Practical Reason*
2. John Locke *The Second Treatise of Government*
3. Jean-Jacque Rousseau *The Social Contract*
4. Oxford English Dictionary entries for "human" and "person"

Week 3 — European Enlightenment: Why do we need human rights?

📖 **Read for this week:**
1. Voltaire *Candide*
2. Ishay, Chapter 2 "Human Rights and the Enlightenment" pages 84-98

⁉️ **In class readings:**
3. Leibniz "Metaphysics Summarized" in *Candide and Related Texts*
4. Karl Marx *Theses on Feurbach*

Week 4 — Humans in the Industrial Age

📖 **Read for this week:**
1. Mary Shelly *Frankenstein*, first half
2. Ishay, Chapter 3 "Human Rights and the Industrial Age" p117-145

⁉️ **In class readings:**
1. The Magna Carta "You shall have your body"
2. The Declaration of Independence "All men are endowed by their creator"

Week 5 — Rights and the Industrial Age

📖 **Read for this week:**
1. Mary Shelly *Frankenstein*, second half
2. Ishay, Chapter 2 "Human Rights and the Enlightenment" pages 99-116

⁉️ **In class readings:**
1. Selections from Mary Wollstonecraft *Vindication of the Rights of Women*

Week 6 — Humans and Rights in the Industrial Age: Gender, Labor, and War

✍ Analytical Essay 1 due on readings from weeks 1 through 5

📖 **Read for this week:**
1. Rebecca Harding Davis "Life in the Iron-Mills" p. 39-74. It would be wise to read the introduction to the short story
2. "Social Reform and the Promise of Dawn" in Davis p. 203-208
3. Herman Melville "The Tartarus of Maids" in Davis p. 176-188
4. Ishay, Chapter 3 "Human Rights and the Industrial Age" p145-172
5. Look at the pictures in Davis!

 استراتيجية **In class readings:**
1. Charter of the International Committee of the Red Cross
2. Selected Civil War poems of Herman Melville

Week 7 — Human Rights and the Great Wars: Nationalism and Rights & the Bolshevik Revolution

📖 **Read for this week:**
1. Kurban Said, *Ali and Nino* First half
2. Ishay, Chapter 4 "Two World Wars" 174-182; 199-206

Week 8 — Institutionalization of Human Rights & dealing with different ontologies

📖 **Read for this week:**
1. Kurban Said, *Ali and Nino* Second half
2. Ishay, Chapter 4 "Two World Wars" 182-191

 استراتيجية **In class readings:**
1. Samphoas Huy's translation of *So Ben Ko Ma*
2. Selections from the Book of Ezekiel
3. Confucius, *The Analects*
4. Mo Tzu *Universal Love*
5. The Buddha *Foundation of the Kingdom of Righteousness*

Week 9 — Human Rights and the Great Wars: The anti-colonial struggles

📖 **Read for this week:**
1. Albert Camus, *The Stranger* First half
2. Ishay, Chapter 4 "Two World Wars" review 191-199;

 استراتيجية **In class readings:**
1. Poetry of Léopold Sédar Senghor

Week 10 — Human Rights and the Great Wars: The image of the formerly colonized

📖 **Read for this week:**
1. Albert Camus, The Stranger Second half
2. Ishay, Chapter 4 "Two World Wars" 191-199

In class readings:
1. Selections from Frantz Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth

Week 11 — Stalin, Hitler, prison and torture
Analytical Essay 2 due on readings from weeks 6 through 10

Read for this week:
1. Arthur Koestler, Darkness at Noon First half
2. Ishay, Chapter 4 "Two World Wars" 199-225

Week 12 — Human Rights in the beginning of the Cold War

Read for this week:
1. Arthur Koestler, Darkness at Noon Second half
2. Ishay, Chapter 4 "Two World Wars" 225-229

Week 13 — Rights for whom? A Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

Read for this week:
1. Hanan al-Shaykh, Women of Sand and Myrrh First half
2. Ishay, Chapter 4 "Two World Wars" 229-243

In class readings:
1. Excerpts from Sudanese jurist Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im
2. Excerpts from Godfrey Lienhardt's Religion of the Dinka

Week 14

Read for this week:
1. Hanan al-Shaykh, Women of Sand and Myrrh Second half

In class readings:
1. Poetry of Akhmatova: "Requiem"

Week 15
Final Paper Due

Read for this week:
1. Tum Teav by Botumthera Som