HUMAN RIGHTS AND WOMEN’S RIGHTS

“Where, after all, do universal rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen in any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood (s)he lives in; the school or college (s)he attends; the factory, farm or office where (s)he works….Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world”

Eleanor Roosevelt. (gender neutral language adapted by instructor)

Course Description

This is an interdisciplinary course for students in social work and women’s studies, who are interested in how human rights standards can be understood and applied in social work and civic life. The purpose of this course is to explore how the promotion of human rights relates to the mission of social work and women’s studies, and how this knowledge can affect social change efforts and promote civil society. The course will emphasize that although human rights are often associated with civil and political oppression, other violation of rights, such as economic, social and cultural rights (grinding poverty, lack of housing, health care and education, physical and sexual violence, and other forms of exploitation and political marginalization) disproportionately affects women and therefore will be given major attention. The development of fluency with human rights terminology will help to reframe these oppressions (i.e. violence against women) as a violation of human rights.

The course will start with exploring the notion that human rights are grounded in fundamental beliefs of what it is to be a human being, related to the concepts of dignity, respect and equality. These concepts are central in human rights promotion and protection as well as in social work and feminist values. The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as the authoritative document of universal standards and the subsequent UN instruments will provide the framework for exploring how these standards are promoted, monitored and enforced. Strategies for change such as legislative and legal strategies, grassroots mobilization, political advocacy, training and education for officials in public services, victim services and empowerment, research and documentation, using media and communication technology will be the focus of students’ projects. The course aims to be more than an overview course, it will call to attention that human rights protection and promotion is a struggle carried out daily by human rights defenders, including social workers and other advocates for those who suffer oppression and deprivation. The course aims at motivating students to become active in a cause.

Course Rationale

The increasing globalization and internationalization of the world, accompanied by an increasing exclusion of vulnerable people to the worlds resources and rights, demands from citizens all over
the world to be knowledgeable about human rights standards. It is also good to be familiar with the context and strategies in which the international community protests violations and/or advances human rights. The overwhelming contradictions in the world today in terms of both attention to human rights, and attention to humiliation and dehumanization have never been acute because of written and visual media. Women and children often suffer the worst casualties of violence and exploitation, in local and international situations. Students (both US and foreign students) in social work or women’s studies working to promote human dignity, equality and social justice, need frameworks to name and analyze violations of human/women’s rights in order to assist individuals and groups to improve the conditions under which they live so that they are able to live lives of dignity. As aspiring professionals, students will be able to articulate violations. They will be familiar with organizations and strategies that work to protect and promote human rights, in particular those of women, in terms of civil and political rights as well as economic, social cultural and group rights.

Course Objectives:
Students will have successfully completed this course when they have demonstrated knowledge and skills to

1. Articulate historical events leading to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Understand the significance of the involvement and role of women in wording of these documents. Be able to articulate the concept of dignity and its violations, such as dehumanization and humiliation in the family, human services and in society at large.
2. Understand the concept of human rights and the politics around the so-called generations of rights such as civil and political rights, economic, social and cultural rights, and collective rights. Articulate how emphasis on civil and political rights or collective rights can create tension and conflicts in terms of women’s rights. Address issues of globalization in this regard.
3. Critically examine from a gender perspective the current status of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, and the subsequent human rights mechanisms, including the role of special rapporteurs, for individual and collective rights. Articulate major issues in the human rights discourse: universality versus cultural relativism; equality, equity and difference, differential foci on civil and political rights vs. economic/cultural and social rights and collective rights, with special attention to how these issues help or hinder the advancement of women’s rights as human rights.
4. Understand and articulate the particular relevance of the human/women’s rights, children’s rights discourse for professions such as social work and women’s studies as related to issues as civil and political freedoms, housing, health, education, employment, reproductive rights, and violence against women, child labor and sexual slavery.
5. Understand the national and international ideological issues related to compliance with human rights standards. Understand the ideological basis of United States reports on domestic and foreign compliance with human rights standards.
6. Be cognizant about proposals that suggest local and global strategies to civil, economic, social, cultural, and solidarity rights, Millennium Development Goals.
7. Assess research and action strategies used to move governments to comply with internationally recognized human rights instruments.
8. Be familiar with human rights strategies and be articulate in one particular human rights strategy that pertains to area of interest and/or country of origin. If possible act upon a human rights issue that has affected you or others you know.

Content Areas:
1. The meaning of human rights; human dignity and humiliation.
3. Human Rights Instruments: International legal resources, treaties, conventions and covenants, international law and domestic laws; UN Specialized Organizations.
4. Generations of rights: civil and political rights, economic, social and cultural rights; solidarity or collective rights. Feminist critiques.
6. The politics of Human Rights: human rights abuses, including violence against women, dealing with past violations and righting wrongs, both in terms of punitive and restorative justice approaches.
7. Complex debates: Philosophical and political underpinnings: Universalism and cultural relativism; public/private (state-non state actors) divide; equality versus difference; individual rights versus groups rights, duty to protect vs value of non-intervention.
8. Applications in social work and civil society: e.g. social welfare policy and rights; childcare, food rights, housing rights, rights to health, education and employment, rights to freedom from violence

Course Format
This course will be taught using primarily a lecture-discussion format. Small learning groups for ‘critical conversations’ and case analysis will be created. Student presentations and forums, guest lectures and videos will contribute to the learning experience.

Preparation, Attendance, and Participation
Preparation (reading assigned materials and gathering required information prior to class), attendance (prompt and continual presence during class hours), and participation, (active contribution to class discussions, offering ideas and questions) is expected. If you are unable to attend, please let me know your reason. Points for participation will be deducted for lack of obvious preparation and absences. More than reasonable absences will result in the full 10 point deduction from your final grade.

Assignments:
1. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its history (due October 11)
Using the assigned class readings as well as independent research, write an academic paper about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Your paper should demonstrate your understanding of the historical significance of this document and its relevance in the world today.
You must address, but are free to address other issues (3-4 pages, double spaced)
- History (how, why started, major proponents and distracters, gender issues)
- Relationship to the US Constitution and Amendments
- Significance, relevance and current debates or issues
- Conclusion (including your definition of human rights)
• Three questions you would raise in relation to the issues you read (either questions for clarification, or questions for discussion).
• Reflections.

2. Biography of a human rights/women’s rights defender (due: October 25)
   Write a 5 page biography of a historical or contemporary, national or international human/women’s rights activist. Indicate the cause (human rights issue) possible organization(s) involved and the role this person plays in the movement. What were the values, beliefs, cultural or political systems that became the target or focus of the human/women’s rights campaign? What were (are) the results of the effort? I.e. Who benefited in what ways? Reflect on the relationship between social work or feminist values and the change efforts. Offer your own reflections on the courage and contribution of this person. Would you have acted in the same way? Why or why not?

2. Quiz: (November 1)
   There will be one quiz. (True/false; multiple choice with a short essay question on selected text readings. A study guide will be made available.

3. Testimony: A written persuasive paper or activist speech (due November 29)
   Students will write a paper or speech (2-3 pages) suitable to be made for a civil or political audience, an advocacy group or social work audience (re: death penalty in the US, including minors) right of asylum, rights of immigrants and refugees, sexual slavery, genital mutilation; reproductive rights; role of women in politics, welfare reform, food rights, housing rights, minority rights, environmental rights etc.) The paper/speech should include an issue statement, a historical analysis, a rights framework for understanding change efforts and recommendations for action. Students will present this speech/paper to a group that would be affected by the content, or present in class. Testimonies need to reflect the respect for and advancement of rights of vulnerable or discriminated against groups of people.

4 Written evaluation of the learning. (due December 6)
   Instructions will be given toward the end of the course.

Criteria for grading written assignments:

a. Writing proficiency: organization and focus; development and documented support of major points or arguments.

b. Involvement with and thoughtfulness about the topic, evidence of research and in-depth inquiry.

c. Mechanics: APA/MLA Style, Grammar, spelling, etc.

Note: Graduated student papers will be evaluated with higher expectations of compliance to these above points.

Note on Plagiarism: Misrepresenting the quality or integrity of academic work by any means is a violation of academic integrity. Such academic dishonesty is a punishable offence. Plagiarism, a common form of academic dishonesty, is the presentation of someone else’s ideas or words as your own. You plagiarize deliberately if you copy a sentence from a book or article and pass it off as your writing, if you summarize or paraphrase someone else’s ideas without acknowledging your debt, or if you buy or borrow a term paper to hand in as your own. You plagiarize accidentally if you carelessly forget quotation marks around another writer’s words or mistakenly omit a source citation for another’s idea because you are unaware of the need to acknowledge the idea.
Violations of academic integrity with respect to examinations include but are not limited to copying the work of another, allowing another student to copy from one’s own work, using crib notes, arranging for another person to substitute in taking an examination, or giving or receiving unauthorized information prior to or during the examination. Students committing academic dishonesty at EWU will be reported to the appropriate University officials and will receive a sanction according to the University policy on Academic Integrity. Sanctions range from failure of the paper to removal from the University.

**Required Texts:**


**Grading**

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>UDHR paper</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>Biography</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Quiz</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Persuasive paper/speech</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>Evaluation of Learning</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
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**Note:** Absenteeism, including extreme absenteeism will result in deductions of points.

**Journals and Newsletters:**

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<th>Magazine</th>
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<tr>
<td>Human Rights Quarterly</td>
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<td>Human Rights Tribune</td>
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<td>Human Rights Watch Update</td>
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<td>Journal on Health and Human Rights</td>
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**Other resources:**

- [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)
- [www.hrusa.org](http://www.hrusa.org)
- [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)
- [www.youthforhumanrights.org](http://www.youthforhumanrights.org)
- [www.umn.edu/humanrts/hrcenter.htm](http://www.umn.edu/humanrts/hrcenter.htm)
Proposed course outline.
Additional readings or small assignments may be added.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings/Resources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Introduction to human rights and women’s rights</td>
<td>Handout: Human dignity and humiliation by Klein Goldewijk and de Gaay Fortman</td>
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<td>September 27</td>
<td>Introductions and motivations/expectations (pre-test)</td>
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<td>Syllabus, course outline and assignments</td>
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<td>Group conversations on current issues: defining rights</td>
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<td></td>
<td>General introductions to human rights and women rights. International aspects of human rights The meaning of dignity and human rights Three generations of human rights</td>
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<td>Creation of learning groups: critical conversations.</td>
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<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Development and History of Human Rights</td>
<td>No class: work on paper</td>
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<td>October 4</td>
<td>Historical events:</td>
<td>DeLaet, intro and Ch 1.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The United Nations Framework</td>
<td>Handout: Universal Declaration of Human Rights</td>
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<td>• Universal Declaration of Human Rights</td>
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<td>• The role of women in shaping human rights ideas.</td>
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<td>• Significance, relevance and</td>
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<td>• Major questions.</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Civil and Political Rights; Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.</td>
<td>DeLaet: Ch 4 + 6</td>
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<td>October 11</td>
<td>Civil and political rights and state sovereignty.</td>
<td>UN Handout on Economic Rights</td>
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<td>Indivisibility of rights: Relationship between civil and political rights, and economic rights</td>
<td>Paper #1 due</td>
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<td>Implication for social work and women’s rights/civic advocacy.</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Civil and Political Rights; Collective Rights</td>
<td>Andrea Vogt: Common Courage</td>
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<td>October 18</td>
<td>Collective rights and individual rights</td>
<td>DeLaet: Ch 5</td>
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<td>From case to cause: role of social workers and women’s rights defenders in struggle for collective rights.</td>
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<td>Local activism and human rights</td>
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<td>Guest speaker: Tony Stewart. Co-founder of the Kootenai county Task Force on Human Relations, Coeur d’Alene</td>
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| Week 5  
| October 25 |
| Human Rights are Women’s rights.  
- Early struggles of gaining rights  
- The UN and women’s rights  
- Women’s equal rights: equality vs difference  
- The Women’s Convention: CEDAW  
- Redefining violence against women as a human rights violation  
- Universalism vs cultural relativism  
| Guest speaker: Dr. Mimi Salamat. The Iranian struggle for women’s rights  
| DeLaet: Ch 2 + 7  
| Milani, Albert & Purushotma: CEDAW  
| Paper # 2  |
| Week 6  
| November 1 |
| Protecting the most vulnerable: social work/civil society and human rights  
| Video: Not for ourselves alone. The history for women’s right to vote.  
| Quiz  
| Handout: Convention on the rights of the child.  
| Other readings and a case study will be made available  |
| Week 7  
| November 8 |
| Millennium Development Goals and Civil, Political Social and Economic Justice.  
- Past violations and redress  
  - Punitive Justice as response to human rights violations  
  - Restorative Justice and human rights.  
  - Social work application  
| DeLaet: Ch 9+10  
| How to deal with past violations.  |
| Week 8  
| November 22 |
| Thanks giving: No class |
| Week 9  
| November 29 |
| Education for empowerment and civil society  
- Promoting human and women’s rights from the top down  
- Promoting human and women’s rights from the bottom up  
- Global mobilization for women’s rights  
| International aspects of women’s rights  
Sexual Trafficking, etc  
| Speeches  
| Persuasive papers/speeches due  
| DeLaet: Ch. 8 +11  |
| Week 10  
| December 6 |
| Speeches, Final conversations, Evaluations.  
| Evaluation of learning due |
Bibliography


Questions will be asked and explored such as: how does the granting of collective rights of minority populations relate to the rights of women in these groups? What is the relationship between civil and political liberties and economic rights? What are the implications for international relations, social work? What is the role of government? Civil society? Helping professions and aid organizations? What are strategies that women as agents of change can utilize to promote and protect their rights? We will discuss feminist critiques on the human rights instruments and become familiar with the complex debates about the public/private divide, universalism and cultural relativism, equality versus difference and institutional obstacles to realize women’s rights. These discussions will help to deepen understanding about gender, power, poverty and conflicts in the world today.