

WS 295/ANTH 295 Special Topics  
**Women's Human Rights**

---

**Instructor: Dr. Kathryn Libal**  
**Email: kathryn.libal@uconn.edu**  
**Phone: 486-1129**  
**Office: Beach 410**

**Meeting time: Thursdays, 4:00-6:30 pm**  
**Classroom: CLAS 163**  
**Office hours: W 9:30-10:30, Th 11-12**

### **COURSE RATIONALE**

This course examines women's human rights in the context of global feminist social movements and evolving norms, institutions and practices of the international human rights system. We will focus on several thematic issues and a number of cases from countries in all the world regions. After providing a foundation for understanding the human rights system, we will examine how women's human rights pose particular challenges and opportunities for the realization of human rights and social justice more broadly. We will look at the interdependency of political, civil, social, economic, and cultural rights and the relationship of these rights to questions of achieving gender justice and equality. The course will examine how the conception of a divide between public and private realms has contributed to the marginalization of women's human rights concerns, and how recently feminists have been able to successfully challenge this notion and begin to hold states accountable for acts of violence against women that take place within the home, community, or at the hands of public actors/the state. Cases will be drawn from the United States, India, South Africa, Rwanda, Turkey, and Iraq, among other countries. Class sessions include background lectures, intensive discussions of readings and human rights documents, and film and other multi-media materials.

### **OVERVIEW OF COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

Students will submit short responses to readings posted to Vista before class sessions; write a mid-term essay (4-5 pages) in response to one of two questions papers; keep a media log/journal with at least one entry a week related to the final paper project; and write an 8-10 page paper on a specific country and/or topic related to women's human rights. The paper will require some outside research as well as integrating insights from relevant class materials.

### **COURSE READINGS**

- ✓ Julie Peters and Andrea Wolper *Women's Rights, Human Rights*. Routledge, 1994.
- ✓ International Women's Tribune Centre. *Rights of Women: A Guide to the Most Important United Nations Treaties on Women's Human Rights*. New York. International Women's Tribune Centre, 1998.
- ✓ Kenneth Neubeck. *When Welfare Disappears: The Case for Economic Human Rights*. Routledge, 2006.
- ✓ A number of our readings will be available only through the VISTA site for the course. This will include one to two newspaper readings per week related to the topic under discussion. These newspaper articles will be added to the site by Monday the week the readings are due. Feel free to forward relevant current articles related to women's human rights in the U.S. and globally to Prof. Libal if you find something that could be of broad interest.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### *Participation (10%)*

Participation is a crucial part of this course. Your thoughts, ideas, and critiques help to animate the learning that takes place within and outside of the classroom. Questions you may raise or ideas you have about given topics will challenge us all to think actively and critically. I've highlighted some ideas about what makes for the most successful class sessions (and especially those focused on discussion).

- **Reading.** A strong classroom discussion is based on your careful reading of the assigned texts for the session. **I suggest taking brief, scholarly notes on readings.** Write down the key argument made by a given author, keywords or concepts that are important to consider, what sorts of examples or evidence the author uses to support her/his case, and questions or critiques you may have. As you reflect on sets of readings, think about connections between authors' arguments, points of convergence or difference, etc. This will also assist you in preparing your E-posts.
- **Listening.** This is one of the most important aspects of discussion. You must be able to restate classmates' contributions so that they would recognize and accept your reformulation of their ideas. Listening allows you to build on or challenge others' ideas respectfully within the flow of ideas under discussion.
- **Speaking.** Address your remarks to the class and not solely to the instructor. Be aware of how often you are contributing to discussion and how this contributes to the tone of the class.
- **Bring the key texts** under consideration for the session(s) to class.
- **Reflecting.** During and after class, reflect on how your ideas have been challenged and/or confirmed by the ideas raised by classmates, readings, videos, or the instructor.

If you are not accustomed to voicing your opinion in large groups, please talk to me in person in the first two weeks to identify ways in which you might begin to actively participate during class sessions.

### *Vista Reading Response E-Posts (20%)*

During the semester students must contribute eight  $\frac{3}{4}$  - 1 page (approximately 300-400 words) reading response e-posts under the "discussion" section of the Vista site. Two of these e-posts must be done in the first four weeks of class and one must focus on the United States at the end of the semester. E-posts are aimed at encouraging inquiry, analysis and discussion among students, both in class and on-line. E-posts are due by 10:00 am the day of class. Students are encouraged, but not required, to read one another's e-posts. These responses are evaluated on the basis of the quality of students' engagement with the core themes of the readings and the coherence and clarity of the writing.

As you read for the week, consider the following questions. These will also help you to write your reading response.

- 1) What is the main argument(s) Why did the author(s) write the article or chapter?
- 2) What is useful about the reading(s)?
- 3) Were any of the points made questionable? If so, why?
- 4) What points, issues, or terms would you like to discuss or have clarified?
- 5) How do the various readings assigned inform each other? Contradict? Raise new questions?

### ***Women's Human Rights Net***

Once a week students should review the website for Women's Human Rights Net to stay up on current women's human rights issues. You may reference WHRNet's articles, interviews, etc., when making an E-post (if relevant for the topic for the week) and writing your final paper. I will provide links for other leading organizations working on women's human rights, some of which may be useful in your research for the final paper.

### ***(Women's) Human Rights Event Analysis Paper (10%)***

Attend one of the human rights activities on campus this semester and write a two-page summary and analysis of the event (typed, double-spaced, etc.). An excellent opportunity would be to attend the keynote address to be given by Charlotte Bunch for the Women's Studies conference (Feb 16 and 17). There will be a number of opportunities to hear other speakers during the conference and over the course of the semester.

Even if the presentation you attend doesn't tackle the question of women's human rights directly, consider how the issue is gendered and may intersect with women's rights in your analysis/critique. In your response outline what the key point(s) was in the presentation, discuss how it intersected with other themes we have been learning about in class, and offer your opinion about the usefulness of the event for expanding your understanding of human rights. Turn in your paper within two weeks from the date of the event that you analyze.

Make sure you proofread your essay and provide appropriate citations when referencing readings from our class. Papers will be evaluated based upon the following criteria:

- A: *outstanding* analysis; solid examples and reasons are given to support your views; clearly written
- B: fulfilled the assignment adequately; few if any grammatical problems or unclear sentences
- C: fulfilled the assignment but either the analysis insufficient or superficial and/or there were a number of grammatical mistakes
- D: the assignment was not adequately fulfilled and/or there were a substantial amount of grammatical errors and awkward and confusing sentences
- F: the assignment was not turned in within two weeks of the due date, or was not completed according to the criteria listed above

### ***Mid-Term Essay (25%)***

A take-home mid-term exam will be given. You will be given one week to response to a question questions (4-5 double-spaced, typed pages), documenting your answers with references to appropriate readings and other class materials. **No late exams will be accepted**, but for exceptional medical or emergency circumstances that can be clearly documented to Professor Libal in writing.

### ***Final Paper (35%)***

This semester you will write an 8-10 page paper on women's human rights, focusing on a particular topic, theoretical question, or a specific country of interest to you. On **March 15** you will turn in a one page proposal, including a list of five scholarly sources (not including class sources) that you intend to examine in order to write your paper. In addition to the five outside sources, students will be required to integrate insights from at least 3 other class sources when writing their paper. Students will all give a short class presentation during one of the last two class sessions. You are expected to attend the last two class sessions. **Papers are due at the beginning of class on April 26. Late papers will be docked ½ letter grade per day.**

We will have research support with the Women's Studies Library Liason, Kathy Labadorf throughout the semester. Please note that on February 8 we will meet in the library to have a workshop on researching women's human rights.

A fuller description of expectations for the assignment and grading criteria will be handed out during Week 2 of the semester.

### ***Writing Assistance***

If you want or need extra assistance with your writing you may visit the Writing Center in CLAS 159 and any of its satellite locations. Check out the locations and times at [www.writingcenter.uconn.edu](http://www.writingcenter.uconn.edu) or give the Center a call at 486-2143.

***Please note:*** *Keep all papers and exams that are returned to you and always make a second hard copy of papers or assignments to keep on file. When typing papers, back-up frequently and print hard copies of your drafts so that you have something to refer to if your computer or disks fail.*

### ***Staying in Touch: Office Appointments and Vista***

My office is in Beach Hall, Room 410. Feel free to visit me during office hours or make an appointment if you want to discuss course material or discuss other issues of interest or concern.

Vista will be an important tool for the class. I will regularly post handouts, links, and, when appropriate, outlines for class lectures and/or discussion questions. You will be responsible for doing these readings and checking to be sure you can access them in advance of the date by which they should be read. In addition, you will make reading response E-Posts on Vista. *If you have an old computer in your home, then you may need to read or download these materials at the library or a computer lab.*

### ***Academic (Mis)Conduct and Plagiarism***

Academic Misconduct in any form is in violation of the University of Connecticut *Student Code* and will not be tolerated. This includes, but is not limited to: copying or sharing answers on tests or assignments, plagiarism, and having someone else do your academic work. Depending on the act, a student could receive an F grade on the test/assignment, F grade for the course, and could be suspended or expelled from the University. Please see the Student Code at

[http://www.dosa.uconn.edu/student\\_code.cfm?sm=yes&from=im&fn=Judicial.Affairs#partvi](http://www.dosa.uconn.edu/student_code.cfm?sm=yes&from=im&fn=Judicial.Affairs#partvi)

for more details and a full explanation of the Academic Misconduct policies. You should review the "Plagiarism" module on our VISTA site as well.

*Please turn down the volume on pagers and turn off cell phones before class begins.*

### ***Special Needs***

Any student in this course who has a disability or special need that you wish to discuss, please contact me within the first two weeks of class to arrange appropriate accommodations to ensure full participation. I am committed to working with you to create a learning environment appropriate to your needs. Our conversations will be held in confidence.

### ***A Note on Structure and Course Requirements***

Any changes to the schedule or assignments will be announced in class and confirmed through a posting to VISTA and/or email.

## ***SCHEDULE OF CLASS SESSIONS AND READINGS***

### **PART I: INTRODUCING WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS: INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES, MECHANISMS, & DEBATES**

---

#### **Introduction: What are human rights? Women's human rights? (January 18)**

- ✓ Exercise on defining human rights
- ✓ Syllabus and course outline
- ✓ Fundamentals of the human rights system

*Assignment for next class session:* Bring to class one newspaper article that addresses women's human rights somewhere in the world (must be from last month).

#### **Women's Rights Are Human Rights (January 25)**

*Key themes:* UN human rights system and core concepts; women's rights AS human rights

Read:

- ✓ Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Vista)
- ✓ Smith, "The United Nations System of Human Rights Protection," pp. 348-351 (Vista)
- ✓ Bunch, "Women's Rights Are Human Rights," pp. 57-69 (Vista)
- ✓ Friedman, "Women's Human Rights: The Emergence of a Movement," pp. 18-25 (P&W)
- ✓ Documentary: *Vienna Tribunal*

#### **Realizing Women's Human Rights through the United Nations System (February 1)**

*Key themes:* The Women's Convention, human rights monitoring of women's rights; key institutions and agencies; strengths and weaknesses of the current system

Read:

- ✓ International Women's Tribune Center. *Rights of Women*, pp. 1-16, 20-22 (IWTC)
- ✓ Stamatapoulou, "Women's Rights and the United Nations," pp. 36-48 (P&W)
- ✓ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in IWTC, pp. 137-143 or at <http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/cedaw.htm> (link on Vista)

#### **Challenging the Public/Private Divide (February 8)—MEET IN BABBIDGE LIBRARY!**

*Library research session led by Kathy Labadorf, Women's Studies Bibliographer and Librarian*

*Key themes:* exploring the public/private divide; defining abuse as a human rights violation; civil rights (right to life, privacy, etc.)

Read:

- ✓ IWTC, "Violence against Women," 62-66. (IWTC)
- ✓ Sullivan, "The Public/Private Dichotomy in International Law," pp. 126-134 (P&W)
- ✓ Benninger-Budel and O'Hanlon, "Expanding the Definition of Torture," pp. 14-15 (Vista)
- ✓ Heise, "Freedom Close to Home: Impact of Violence Against Women on Reproductive Rights," pp. 238-255 (P&W)
- ✓ From the *Secretary General's In Depth Study of the Consequences of Violence Against Women*
  - "Executive Summary: Ending Violence Against Women: From Words to Action" (Vista)
  - "Violence Against Women: Forms, Consequences, and Costs" (Vista)

## **Gender, Culture, and the Politics Violence against Women (February 15)**

*Key themes: The cultural relativism debates; politicization of women's bodies; debating how to tackle "culturally challenging" practices; human rights and imperialism*

Read:

- ✓ Rao, "The Politics of Gender and Culture in International Human Rights Discourses," pp. 167-175 (P&W)
- ✓ Mayer, "Cultural Particularism as a Bar to Women's Human Rights: Reflections on the Middle East Experience," pp. 176-188 (P&W)
- ✓ Toubia, "Female Genital Mutilation," pp. 224-237 (P&W)
- ✓ Mertus, "State Discriminatory Law and Customary Abuses," pp. 135-148 (P&W)

## **PART II: LOCALIZING HUMAN RIGHTS NORMS AND PRACTICES**

---

### **Discrimination and Mobilizing for Change in India (February 22)**

*Key themes: Women's economic and social rights; discrimination on the basis of caste; violence against women*

Read:

- ✓ Howard, "Women's Rights and the Right to Development," pp. 303-313 (P&W)
- ✓ Ganguly, "India's Dalits: Between Atrocity and Protest," pp. 1-5 (Vista)
- ✓ Jaising, "Violence Against Women: The Indian Perspective," pp. 51-56 (P&W)
- ✓ CEDAW, "Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women Concludes Consideration of India Report," pp. 1-5 (Vista)
- ✓ Documentary excerpts: *Stolen Childhoods* on girls' labor, *The Untouchables*

**Mid-term Essay topic handed out in class. Due at the beginning of class on March 1.**

### **Key Debates in Women's Rights in Turkey (March 1)**

*Key themes: Women's economic and social rights; sexuality and violence against women; state complicity and state-sponsored violations*

Read:

- ✓ Keklik, "'As If She Is Family': The Marginalisation of Unpaid Household Workers in Turkey," pp. 191-198 (Vista)
- ✓ Pelin, "The Question of Virginity Testing in Turkey," pp. 256-261 (Vista)
- ✓ Pervizat, "In the Name of Honor," pp. 1-2 (Vista)
- ✓ Arat, "Struggle on Two Fronts," pp. 1-2 (Vista)
- ✓ Documentaries: *In the Morning* and *Educating Yaprak*

**Mid-term essay due at the beginning of class. Plan ahead to print the essay on time and also turn in an electronic version of the exam to Prof. Libal at [kathryn.libal@uconn.edu](mailto:kathryn.libal@uconn.edu).**

**Spring Break. No class on March 8.**

## **Iraq: Human Security, War, and Women's Rights (March 15)**

*Key themes: Gender and war; refugees and internally displaced families and impacts on women; economic and social rights; violence against women: whose responsibility to protect?*

Read:

- ✓ Wali, "Human Rights for Refugee and Displaced Women," pp. 335-344 (P&W)
- ✓ Al-Ali, "Reconstructing Gender: Iraqi Women between Dictatorship, War, Sanctions and Occupation," pp. 739-758 (Vista)
- ✓ Trejos, "Women Lose Ground in the New Iraq," pp. 1-5 (Vista)
- ✓ Human Rights Watch, "Attacks on Women," in *A Face and a Name: Civilian Victims of Insurgent Groups in Iraq*, pp. 93-98 (Vista)
- ✓ Documentary: *In the Name of Honour*

## **Rwanda: Gender, Genocide, and Reconstruction (March 22)**

*Key themes: Genocide, postwar reconstruction, and health (HIV/AIDS)*

Read:

- ✓ Human Rights Watch, "Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence during the Rwandan Genocide and Its Aftermath," pp. 1-43 (note: report is longer than this) (Vista)
- ✓ Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, "Rebuilding Rwanda: A Struggle Men Can Not Do Alone," pp. 1-28 (Vista)
- ✓ Documentary: *Ghosts of Rwanda* (and *Ladies First* to be viewed on March 29)

## **Democratization and Women's Rights in South Africa (March 29)**

*Key themes: Civil and political rights; apartheid legacy and various levels of violence against women; social and economic rights (education)*

Read:

- ✓ Mabandla, "Women in South Africa and the Constitution-Making Process," pp. 67-71 (P&W)
- ✓ Excerpts from Human Rights Watch, *Forgotten Schools: Right to Basic Education on Farms in South Africa*, pp. 1-51 (note: report is longer)(Vista)
- ✓ CEDAW, "South Africa," Report of the *Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women*, pp. 58-61 (Vista)

## **Women's Health and Human Rights in South Africa (April 5)**

*Key themes: Human security; social and economic rights (health, HIV/AIDS)*

Read:

- ✓ Harper, "Rights for All in the New South Africa," pp. 8-9 (Vista)
- ✓ Albertyne, "Contesting Democracy: HIV/AIDS and the Achievement of Gender Equality in South Africa," pp. 595-615 (Vista)
- ✓ Peris Jones, "'A Test of Governance': Rights-Based Struggles and the Politics of HIV/AIDS Policy in South Africa," pp. 419-47 (Vista)
- ✓ Documentary: *State of Denial*

### **United States: CEDAW and the Politics of Ratification (April 12)**

*Key themes: U.S. ratification; key women's human rights concerns in the US; social and economic rights*

Read:

- ✓ Payan, "Women's Human Rights in the United States: An Immigrant's Perspective," pp. 82-88 (P&W)
- ✓ Neubeck, *When Welfare Disappears: The Case for Economic Human Rights*, pp. 1-16, 67-111, 151-176

### **United States: Tackling Violence Against Women (April 19)**

*Key themes: Violence at home and in state institutions; children's rights; non-discrimination and civil rights*

Read:

- ✓ Violence against girls and women within the prison system
  - Cuthbert et al, "Battered Mothers vs. U.S. Family Courts," pp. 1-2 (Vista)
  - Human Rights Watch, *U.S.: Custody and Control*, selected pages.
- ✓ Documentary: *Segregation Unit*

### **Student presentations (April 26 and Finals Week Class Session.)**

**Note: Students are required to attend both sessions.**