

Columbia University Splash 2016

The Two Lenses: Adhering to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights While Maintaining Cultural Values

Saturday, November 5th, 2016

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I. Lecture Description

The “Two Lenses” lecture examines the relationship between the cultural aspect and ethical aspect to human rights law and the general notion of human rights, which make up the two lenses by which human rights violations and measures of adherence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 are evaluated. It considers a wide range of case studies in such countries as Malawi, Sudan, Liberia, and the like; in such revolutions as South Sudan’s (and its ensuing civil war), Haiti’s, Latin America’s, the Arab Spring, and the United States’; and in such practices as genital mutilation (especially in females), early and arranged marriages, chiefdom, and religious rites; and challenges the students to think critically about the lens with which these are typically associated and evaluate these associations. Transitory instances of human rights violations and adherences will also be discussed. An overlying theme that will be frequently synthesized into case studies and concept discussions is the role of westernization and the westernization of human rights as a whole. Within this framework, students will leave with a broadened understanding of human rights and current events and be able to utilize the case studies and concepts as catalysts for discussion and debate in the future.

II. Objective

The purpose of this lecture is to introduce the concept that human rights and the status of a violation of such rights should not be evaluated by simply using the ethical perspective, especially considering much of the ethics discussed are those of the western hemisphere. It will challenge the students to think critically about whether intervention in cultural practices deemed by western institutions as violations of human rights are ethical in terms of cultural preservation. The lecture

also hopes to promote and encourage students to take action and have a voice in public matters and current events centered around human rights.

III. Texts, Readings, and Materials

Several excerpts of textbooks, articles, studies, and novels will be provided by the instructor. Excerpts are taken from the following texts:

- *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice* (Donnelly),
- *Three Cups of Tea* (Mortenson),
- *The Declaration of Independence* (Jefferson),
- *King Leopold's Ghost* (Hochschild),
- *The Endtimes of Human Rights* (Hopgood),
- *Agreement Among the People's Republic of Angola, the Republic of Cuba, and the Republic of South Africa* (United Nations),
- "Angola and Namibia Accords Signed" (Lewis),
- Additional articles and excerpts from textbooks and novels.

NOTE: The material above in no way serves as a definitive representation of the instructor's views or understandings, and are meant only to serve as catalysts for discussion.

IV. Materials

Students are recommended to bring at least a pen/pencil and a notebook. They may also find it useful to have with them a laptop. While the above materials may be brought in and would prove helpful to the students' understanding, it is by no means required, as this is a purely discussion-based lecture.

V. Class Participation

It is encouraged by the instructor that *all* students participate in discussion and debate; any and all ideas are accepted. There is a zero-tolerance policy for intentional offense and action will be taken if such a problem of a sizeable degree arises.

VI. Class Schedule (all times are approximate and circumstantial, may vary based on class size)

If lecture is two hours:

Time	Topic	Readings
2:00pm	Instructor's Introduction	N/A
2:05pm	Introduction to ethical aspect of human rights and human rights law	Frequent reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (UDHR48).

2:15pm	Introduction to cultural aspect of human rights and human rights law	See above.
2:25pm	Brief introduction to the Paris Principles (& critical analysis) KEY Q: To what degree are these ideals westernized, and how might this affect international implementation?	Paris Principles
2:40pm	Recognizing education as a fundamental human right and analyzing the degree of westernization in current international education reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Three Cups of Tea</i> ● <i>Universal Human Rights</i> ● <i>Endtimes of Human Rights</i>
3:05pm	Discussion of pre- and post-UDHR48 revolutions and evaluating them using modern human rights laws and literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>UDHR48</i> ● <i>Universal Human Rights</i> ● <i>King Leopold's Ghost</i> ● <i>etc.</i>
3:30pm-4:00pm OPT. 1	Debate on a case study using content from lecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Any text, as needed
3:30pm-4:00pm OPT. 2	Sustained discussion and lecture on human rights development independent of the UN's ideals & further analysis of cultural practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Any text, as needed

If lecture is one hours:

Time	Topic	Readings
2:00pm	Instructor's Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● N/A
2:05pm	Introduction to ethical aspect of human rights and human rights law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Frequent reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (UDHR48).

2:15pm	Introduction to cultural aspect of human rights and human rights law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● See above.
2:25pm	<p>Brief introduction to the Paris Principles (& critical analysis) and recognizing education as a fundamental human right and analyzing the degree of westernization in current international education reform</p> <p>KEY Q: To what degree are these ideals westernized, and how might this affect international implementation?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Paris Principles ● <i>Three Cups of Tea</i> ● <i>Universal Human Rights</i> ● <i>Endtimes of Human Rights</i>
2:40pm	Discussion of pre- and post-UDHR48 revolutions and evaluating them using modern human rights laws and literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>UDHR48</i> ● <i>Universal Human Rights</i> ● <i>King Leopold's Ghost</i> ● <i>etc.</i>
2:50pm	Conclusion, questions, and last-minute discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Any text, as needed
3:00pm	Dismissal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● N/A