The Politics of Human Rights
G53.3700001
George W. Downs
Spring 2006

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Course Description:
This course provides a broad introduction to the politics of human rights. It focuses on 1) the political history of the current international human rights regime; 2) the nature of contemporary human rights problems and the role that politics plays in generating them; and 3) the strategies that are currently being advocated to more effectively reduce the high level of human rights violations.

Course requirements:
- **Class Participation (15%)**:
- **Short Papers on Readings (20%)**
- **Class Presentations (25%)**: Students will make a presentation on their final paper (15%) and lead the discussion on a particular reading or a set of readings twice during the semester (5% each).
- **Research Paper (40% of course grade)**: An original piece of research that draws from the topics covered in the course. It may be an extension of one of the research proposals. The paper should be 20-25 pages in length and is due at the end of the finals' week.

Required Texts:


Digital Coursepack: sold through the bookstore
Week 1. Introduction

Week 2. The Evolution of Human Rights


Recommended Readings:


Week 3. Why Do States Abuse Human Rights?


Recommended Readings:


Week 4. Constitutions and Human Rights


**Recommended Readings:**


**Week 5. Elections, Democracy, Democratization and Human Rights**


**Recommended Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


**Weeks 7 and 8. Why Do States Adopt Human Rights Treaties? Do They Make a Difference**


**Recommended Readings:**


**Weeks 9 and 10. Transnationalism: Institutions, Norms and Networks**


**Recommended Readings:**


**FYI. Measures and Measurement Issues in Human Rights**


Recommended Readings:
