Human Rights and Memory in Argentina  
Fall 2017

Instructors: Dr. Carla Yumatle and Camila Perochena

Meetings:
Section A: Monday and Wednesday 9am-12:45pm
Section B: Tuesday and Thursday 9am-12:45pm

Description

This course examines both philosophical topics on human rights and the politics of human rights in Argentina, specifically during the military dictatorship (1976-1983) and the democratic transition. It is our understanding that any discussion on applied topics on human rights should include as well an account of their philosophical underpinnings. Thus, the course combines philosophical, historical and empirical analysis. Each week, you will attend one lecture on a philosophical topic on human rights and the other on the history and politics of human rights in Argentina. The philosophical discussions should clarify concepts and ideas that are relevant in the analysis of human rights history in Argentina after 1973.

Philosophical topics include conceptual analysis of the ideas of human rights, genocide and torture; an assessment of their competing philosophical justifications; and the intersection between feminist theory and women’s human rights.

Historical topics include a survey of Argentine political history; the scope, structure and consequences of Argentine state violence; the role of other social actors in the violation of human rights; the lexicon and discourses of violence and how they shaped the body politic; transitional justice (trials, truth commission, amnesties, pardons and reparations); the role and morphology of collective memory in wrestling with a tragic past; and the place of gender in human rights violations in Argentina.

Reading Material: All required readings are available to students electronically on the Campus Virtual.

Syllabus for Fall 2017. Final syllabi for subsequent years may be subject to change.
Course Requirements:
(1) Knowledgeable, constructive and active participation in class discussions (20%).
For each meeting, you are expected to have read the assigned text carefully, and to be ready to discuss it. Always bring the assigned text to class.
(2) Midterm examination. It consists of 10 multiple-choice questions that require a succinct justification (30%). Dates: Section A: Monday, September 17th
Section B: Tuesday, September 18th
(3) Final term examination. A two-page in-class argumentative essay on a problem topic assigned at the moment of the exam. A set of topics covering both the philosophical and historical parts of the class will be provided from which the student can choose one (50%). Dates: Section A: Wednesday, October 4th
Section B: Thursday, October 5th

Failure to comply with any of the assignments will be penalized at the rate of 1/3 of a grade a day. This grade penalty will only be waived in the case of documented medical emergencies. All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.

Academic Integrity Policy: Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For assignments in this course, you are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers, particularly if you are working on the same topic as a classmate. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practices in this discipline and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. If you received any help with your writing (feedback on drafts, etc.), you must also acknowledge this assistance.

We will hold you responsible for understanding this, so if you have any doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, or what it means to turn in an exam that is entirely your own work, you should talk to either of us in advance. Plagiarism (or similar academic dishonesty) is a grave offense, and it shall be treated accordingly. The presentation of another person’s work as one’s own will be reported to the university administration.

Attendance policy: Class attendance is mandatory. Students must attend at least 80% of classes and academic visits related to the course. Students are allowed only three (3) absences and one (1) late arrival to class (subsequent late arrivals count as absences). Visits are an integral part of the program, therefore not attending or arriving late to a visit will be treated in the same way as an absence or late arrival to class. If students miss class for a medical reason, they must present a medical waiver in order for the class to be counted as an excused absence. Medical waivers will only be valid if they are issued on letterhead, include the doctor’s signature and stamp, are issued immediately before or on the date of the absence and indicate diagnosis

Syllabus for Fall 2017. Final syllabi for subsequent years may be subject to change.
and indicated treatment. Please note, when students miss a class they are still responsible for the material covered. It is their responsibility to ask a classmate for class notes and then, after reading them over, see the professor in a timely manner with any questions on the material.

**Religious Observance:** Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this program. If a student has a religious observance that conflicts with his or her participation in this course, they must advise the professor before the end of the first week of the term to discuss appropriate accommodations. No accommodations will be made after this time.

**Accommodations:** The only special accommodations which will be contemplated are those requested in writing by the students’ home campus before the end of the first week of the program. No accommodations will be made after this time.

---

**Class Schedule and Readings**

**WEEK 1**

**Lecture 1: What Are Human Rights?**

*Individuals are carriers of human rights in virtue of being human regardless of the states in which they happen to live. This lecture is a conceptual exploration of that idea, its moral distinctiveness and scope of application.*

**Readings:**


French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen [3 pages]

UN Declaration of Human Rights [8 pages]

UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide [4 pages]


**Lecture 2: Argentine Political History 1930-1976**

*An overview of the major political events between 1930 and 1976 including the first coup d’état and the role of the armed forces; the origins of Peronism and Peron’s governments; subsequent coups in 1955 and 1966; the National Security Doctrine in Latin America; and the surge of political violence between 1973 and 1976.*

**Readings:**


WEEK 2
Lecture 3: The History of Human Rights

This lecture examines the historical development of the idea of human rights, the path towards the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and its evolution to the contemporary idea of human rights in the international context.

Readings:

Lecture 4: State Violence in Argentina

Strategies, motives and organization of state power holders and other social and political actors including the church, corporations and foreign powers during the military dictatorship (1976-1983). The emergence of human rights movements during the military repression. Human rights violations during the Malvina’s war. Children of the “disappeared.”

Readings:
Jerry Davila, Dictatorship in South America (Blackwell Publishing, 2013), pp. 112-136 [24 pages]


Juan Forero, “Argentine war heroes revealed to be henchmen in military dictatorship,” The Washington Post, April 5, 2012

WEEK 3
Lecture 5: Philosophical Foundations of Human Rights

An examination of the competing philosophical justifications of human rights (natural rights theories, dignity-based approaches, social constructivism, and political

Syllabus for Fall 2017. Final syllabi for subsequent years may be subject to change.
accounts). *We focus on the origins of human rights, how we justify them and why this matters.*

**Readings:**


**Lecture 6: The Disappeared and the Lexicon on Terror**

*An analysis of the military, political and social lexicon that framed the execution of state sponsored terrorism, its justification, and the allocation of responsibilities.*

**Readings:**


**WEEK 4: MID-TERM EXAM**

**Lecture 7: Genocide: What Is It? (and Mid-Term Exam)**

*An introduction to the idea of genocide, how it differs from other mass atrocities, how it fits the historical developments in Argentina during the 70s, and a global comparison with other cases of genocide.*

**Readings:**

**Lecture 8: Terror on Trial**


**Readings:**

Syllabus for Fall 2017. Final syllabi for subsequent years may be subject to change.

**WEEK 5**

**Lecture 9: Torture: Is It Ever Permitted?**

*A discussion of the distinctive moral wrongness of torture. Is state-sponsored torture ever justified? Shall we make a difference between liberal democracies and military dictatorship in allowing the use of torture? Is there such a thing as good torture or should there be an absolute prohibition upon it? Can liberal democracies afford torture? Discussion includes Argentina, Guantanamo, and Israeli cases among others.*

**Readings:**

Alan Dershowitz, “Should the Ticking Bomb Terrorist Be Tortured?” in *Why Terrorism Works* (Yale UP, 2002), pp. 131-164 [33 pages]

Steven Lukes, “Liberal Democratic Torture” *Political Studies*, 36, 1-16 [16 pages]


**Lecture 10: Collective Memory in Argentina**

*The role of memory in the construction of the collective conscience. The struggle for the shaping of memory, new generations coping with the legacies of terror, the politics of memory. “Never Again”: the two evils theory and the two prologues. The disputes around the construction of Museo de la Memoria, ex ESMA and the Parque de la Memoria.*

**Readings:**

Emilio Crenzel, “Between the voices of the State and the Human Rights Movement: Never Again and the Memories of the Disappeared in Argentina” in *Journal of Social History*, Volume 44, Number 4, Summer 2011, pp. 1063-1076 [13 pages]


WEEK 6
Lecture 11: Gender and Human Rights (philosophical and historical lectures will be delivered together)

Philosophical part:
An overview of the intersection between feminist theory and human rights.

Readings:

Historical part:
The role of gender and motherhood during military repression. Testimonial accounts of female political prisoners. Madres and Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, the grandchildren and the right to identity.

Readings:

Lecture 12: FINAL EXAM