

PT158 Scholars at Risk

Seminar Leader: Kerry Bystrom
Course Times: Wednesday 16:00-17:30
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Office Hours: Wednesday 10:30-12:00

Course Description

4 ECTS-2 US credits. Scholars, students, and other researchers around the world are routinely threatened, jailed, or punished. Sometime they are simply trapped in a dangerous place, while in other cases they are deliberately targeted because of their identity or their work. Academic freedom, or freedom of thought and inquiry, is usually considered a basic human right, but its definition and content is essentially contested. This seminar will explore the idea of academic freedom by examining — and attempting to intervene in — situations where it is threatened. In conjunction with the human rights organization Scholars at Risk (SAR), we will investigate the cases of scholars currently living under threat and develop projects aimed at releasing them from detention or securing refuge for them. This will involve direct hands-on advocacy work with SAR, taking public positions and creating smart and effective advocacy campaigns for specific endangered students, teachers, and researchers. In order not to do this naively or uncritically, we will explore the history and theory of academic freedom, humanitarianism and human rights advocacy, including the ethics and politics of risk and rescue.

Please note: This course is being taught in conjunction with the Scholars at Risk course in Bard College Annandale, taught by Professor Tom Keenan, and will involve joint classroom sessions and a group project with students enrolled in the Annandale section.

Readings

All readings for this class will be included in the required course reader or circulated as PDFs or links to on-line materials. Students must purchase the course reader from the Library.

Requirements

- Active and informed participation in all class sessions
- Midterm Paper
- Scholars at Risk Advocacy Final Project (including researching, drafting and finalizing materials; group presentation; and reflection paper)

Attendance

Syllabi should note that attendance at ALL classes is expected. More than two absences (that is absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester will significantly affect the participation grade for the course.

In accordance with the Student Handbook, a failing grade for the course will be given if absences reach 30% of the course meetings. Students should consult the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

Please note: This class is a seminar and is therefore dependent not only on you actually being in class but on the quality of thought and energy you bring. Class sessions often include brainstorming and writing periods, in which you may work alone or with a partner. You may also be asked to select passages, formulate discussion questions, complete informal writing assignments or prepare informal mini-presentations in advance of the class. You are expected to engage in all of these activities; failure to do so will impact your class participation grade. It is crucial that you prepare adequately for each class and bring hard copies of the text(s) we will be discussing with you to the seminar meeting. Please note further that cell phones, laptops, and tablets should be switched off during class sessions.

Assignments

All assignments in this course are geared to your SAR case.

The Midterm paper is a chance for you to reflect on your SAR case in relation to some questions surrounding the history and ethics of humanitarian (versus human rights) advocacy. This is a 1200-1500-word (3 page, double-spaced) essay.

The Advocacy Final Project is the production, in groups, of background guides or advocacy materials (or both) for your assigned SAR case. Groups will be asked to submit an organization plan before the mid-point of the semester detailing who is responsible for which aspect of the project. In the last week of the semester, each student will hand in all written (and other) materials produced for the case and write a short (ca. 500 words) ungraded reflection paper, in addition to participating in a group oral presentation.

Academic Integrity

In this course, we aim to conduct ourselves as a community of scholars, recognizing that academic study is both an intellectual and ethical enterprise. You are encouraged to build on the ideas and texts of others; that is a vital part of academic life. However, you are also obligated to document every occasion when you use another's ideas, language, or syntax. When you use another's ideas or language—whether through direct quotation, summary, or paraphrase—you must formally acknowledge that debt by signaling it in the MLA parenthetical format (<http://www.mla.org/style>). Please come to see me if you have any questions about when and how to cite. Further note that even one occasion of academic dishonesty, large or small, on any assignment, large or small, may result in referral to the Examination Board and failure for the entire course.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. If I agree to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, you will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Grade Breakdown

Participation: 25%

Mid-term Paper: 25%

Scholars at Risk Final Project: 50%

Schedule

Please note that this schedule is subject to change and it is your responsibility to keep up with the latest assignments and deadlines.

Wednesday 1 February
Introduction

Assignment: Read the SAR materials distributed during the first class, research the choices and select your top three cases for study/advocacy work. Please send your choices to instructors Kerry Bystrom (k.bystrom@berlin.bard.edu) and Tom Keenan (keenan@bard.edu) by 5pm on Tuesday 7 February. Groups will be assigned to specific cases by Tuesday 14 February.

Wednesday 8 February
Scholars at Risk presentation by staff member (Annandale; via Blue Jeans link in Berlin)
Meet in P24 conference room

Wednesday 15 February
Guest Lecture by SAR scholar (Berlin; via Blue Jeans link in Annandale)
Meet in P24 conference room
Reading TBA
Begin research on assigned SAR case

Wednesday 22 February: Histories of Humanitarianism
Reading:

- Michael Barnett, Chapter 1, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism*, pp. 19-46

Wednesday 1 March: Humanitarianism and Human Rights
Reading:

- Richard Wilson and Richard D. Brown, Introduction, *Humanitarianism and Suffering: The Mobilization of Empathy*, pp. 1-30
- Glenn Mitoma and Kerry Bystrom, "Humanitarianism and Responsibility in Discourse and Practice," in *Human Rights Protection in Global Politics. Responsibilities of State and Non-State Actors* ed. Kurt Mills and Jason Karp, pp. 23-45

Wednesday 8 March: Humanitarianism, Human Rights and (Neo) Colonialism
Readings:

- Makau Mutua, "Savages, Victims and Saviors: The Metaphors of Human Rights," *Harvard International Law Journal* (2001)

Group Organization Plan due in class

Wednesday 15 March:
Freedom of Expression/Academic Freedom: A Genealogy
Readings:

- Joseph Slaughter, "A Question of Narration: Voice in International Human Rights Law," *Human Rights Quarterly* (1997)

Mid-term paper assignment

Wednesday 22 March: Advocacy Strategies I: Raising Awareness
Readings:

- Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, "Transnational Advocacy Projects in International and Regional Politics," *International Social Studies Journal* (1999)

- Jonathan Benthall, "Ambivalence within the Agencies," *Disasters, Relief and the Media*, pp. 56-91

Wednesday 29 March

Advocacy Strategies I: Raising Awareness cont'd

Readings:

- James Dawes, "Storytelling," *That the World May Know: Bearing Witness to Atrocity*, pp. 164-229

Wednesday 5 April

No Class (Kerry at conference): Make-up TBA

Midterm paper due at 5pm

Spring Break

Wednesday 19 April

Advocacy Strategies I: Raising Awareness cont'd

Readings:

- Thomas Keenan, "Publicity and Indifference: Sarajevo on Television," *PMLA* (2002)
- Lilie Chouliaraki, "Solidarity and Spectatorship," *The Ironic Spectator: Solidarity in the Age of Post-Humanitarianism*, pp. 1-25

Wednesday 26 April

Advocacy Strategies II: Lawfare

Readings:

- John Comaroff, TBA

Wednesday 3 May

Advocacy Strategies II: Lawfare cont'd

Readings:

- Eyal Weizman, "Introduction: Forensis," *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth*, pp. 9-32

Wednesday 10 May

Class rescheduled for Completion Week

Wednesday 17 May

Student Presentations

Final Project Materials due in class