

# Narrative and Human Rights

CLEN W4550  
T/R 6:10-7:30: 614 Schermerhorn  
Fall 2006

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Office Hrs: 615 Philosophy:  
W 4:30-6; R 1-2

[https://courseworks.columbia.edu/cms/outview/courseenter.cfm?no=CLENW4550\\_001\\_2006\\_3](https://courseworks.columbia.edu/cms/outview/courseenter.cfm?no=CLENW4550_001_2006_3)

We will study the convergences and interdependencies of the philosophies, politics, practices, thematics and formal properties of literature and human rights. In particular, we will consider the ways in which human rights discourse and literature's generic technologies of representation construct visions of the human being and/in society and facilitate (or not) the imagination of an international order based on human dignity, equality, and rights. We will read both classic literary texts and contemporary writing (both literary and non-literary) to think about the relationship between story forms and human rights problematics and practices—e.g., sentimentality and humanitarianism; drama and truth commissions; *testimonio* and group rights; the *Bildungsroman* and individual human rights claims; chivalric romance and human rights advocacy; the *picaresque* and refugees; lyrical memoir and torture, the epic and nationalism; epistolary and human rights campaigns, etc.

## Reading/Discussion Schedule (see CourseWorks for more details)

Week 1: 9/5  9/7	Introduction; <i>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</i> : <a href="http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/lang/eng.htm">http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/lang/eng.htm</a> Angelina Jolie (tattoo and multimedia reading of <i>Ripples of Genocide</i> ) KFOR Beach Boys Parody video John Humphrey, "The Magna Carta of Mankind" H. G. Wells, from <i>The Rights of Man; or, What Are We Fighting For?</i> Julio Cortázar, "Apocalypse at Solentiname" (Argentina/France) <i>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights</i> : <a href="http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr.htm">http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr.htm</a> <i>International Covenant on Social, Economic, and Cultural Rights</i> : <a href="http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/cescr.htm">http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/cescr.htm</a> Arnold Schwarzenegger at RNC The Specials, "Free Nelson Mandela"; Prophets of Da City, "Neva Again"
Week 2: 9/12 9/14	David Weissbrodt, "Human Rights: An Historical Perspective" Costas Douzinas, "The Triumph of Human Rights" Paul Cobley, "Narratology." <i>The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism</i> : ( <a href="http://litguide.press.jhu.edu/cgi-bin/view.cgi?eid=189">http://litguide.press.jhu.edu/cgi-bin/view.cgi?eid=189</a> ) Martha Nussbaum, "The Narrative Imagination" Henry Dunant, <i>A Memory of Solférino</i> : ( <a href="http://www.icrc.org/WEB/ENG/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/p0361?OpenDocument&amp;style=Custo_Final.4&amp;View=defaultBody2">http://www.icrc.org/WEB/ENG/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/p0361?OpenDocument&amp;style=Custo_Final.4&amp;View=defaultBody2</a> )
Week 3: 9/19 9/21	Michael Ondaatje, <i>Anil's Ghost</i> (Canada-Sri Lanka) Peter Brooks, "Reading for Plot" K. Anthony Appiah, "Citizens of the World"
Week 4: 9/26  9/28	<i>Anil's Ghost</i> (cont.) <i>Hotel Rwanda</i> (will be shown 9/27) <i>Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide</i> : ( <a href="http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/genocide.htm">http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/genocide.htm</a> ) Adamantia Pollis and Peter Schwab, "Human Rights: A Western Construct with Limited Applicability" Wayne Booth, "Individualism and the Mystery of the Social Self"
Week 5: 10/3 10/5	<i>Hotel Rwanda</i> (cont.) Jeanette Turner Hospital, "Dear Amnesty" (Australia) Ken Saro-Wiwa, "Africa Kills Her Sun" (Nigeria) Elaine Scarry, "The Difficulty of Imagining Other People" Stanley Cohen and Bruna Seu, "Knowing Enough Not to Feel Too Much"
Week 6: 10/10	Sindiwe Magona, <i>Mother to Mother</i> (South Africa) <i>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination</i> :

10/12	<p>(<a href="http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/cerd.htm">http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/cerd.htm</a>)  <i>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women</i>:  (<a href="http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/cedaw.htm">http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/cedaw.htm</a>)  Kaye Schaffer and Sidonie Smith, selections from <i>Human Rights and Narrated Lives</i>  Richard Rorty, "Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality"</p>
Week 7: 10/17	<b><i>Mother to Mother</i></b> (cont.)
10/19	<p>Ariel Dorfman, <b><i>Death and the Maiden</i></b> (Chile) (will be shown 10/18)  <i>Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment</i>:  (<a href="http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/cat.htm">http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/cat.htm</a>)  <i>Principles of Medical Ethics Relevant to the Role of Health Personnel, Particularly Physicians, in the Protection of Prisoners and Detainees Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment</i>: (<a href="http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/medicalethics.htm">http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/medicalethics.htm</a>)  Charlotte Bunch, "Transforming Human Rights from a Feminist Perspective"  Makau Mutua, "Human Rights as a Metaphor"  Ñacuñán Sáez, "Torture: A Discourse on Practice"</p>

**October 20: Midterm ESSAYS DUE 4pm in my mailbox: 602 Philosophy Hall**

Week 8: 10/24 10/26	<p><b><i>Death and the Maiden</i></b> (cont.)  Cristina Peri Rossi, <b><i>Ship of Fools</i></b> (Uruguay)  <i>Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance</i>:  (<a href="http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/disappearance.htm">http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/disappearance.htm</a>)  <i>Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness</i>: (<a href="http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/statelessness.htm">http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/statelessness.htm</a>)  <i>Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees</i>: (<a href="http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/refugees.htm">http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/refugees.htm</a>)  Hannah Arendt, "The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of Human Rights"  Edward Said, "Permission to Narrate"</p>
Week 9: 10/31 11/2	<b><i>Ship of Fools</i></b> (cont.)
Week 10: 11/7 11/9	<p>NO CLASS—Election Day  <b><i>Darwin's Nightmare</i></b> (will be shown 11/8)  Hayden White, "Narrativity and the Representation of Reality"</p>
Week 11: 11/14 11/16	<p>Nuruddin Farah, <b><i>Gifts</i></b> (Somalia)  <i>Declaration on the Right to Development</i>: (<a href="http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/rtd.htm">http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/rtd.htm</a>)  Upendra Baxi, "Human Rights Movements and Human Rights Markets"  Joseph Slaughter, "Enabling Fictions and Novel Subjects: The <i>Bildungsroman</i> and International Human Rights Law"</p>
Week 12: 11/21 11/23	<p><b><i>Gifts</i></b> (cont.)  NO CLASS—Thanksgiving</p>
Week 13: 11/28 11/30	<p><b><i>Batman, Death of Innocents: The Horrors of Landmines</i></b>  Selections from <b><i>Don Quixote</i></b>  Barbara Harlow, "From the 'Civilizing Mission' to 'Humanitarian Interventionism'"  Gil Gott, "Imperial Humanitarianism: History of an Arrested Dialectic"  Cain, Postlewait, Thomson, <b><i>Emergency Sex and Other Desperate Measures</i></b>  <i>Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms</i>:  (<a href="http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/freedom.htm">http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/freedom.htm</a>)  InterAction Council's <i>Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities</i>  (<a href="http://www.interactioncouncil.org/">http://www.interactioncouncil.org/</a> CLICK on "Human Responsibility" in Menu Window)</p>
Week 14: 12/5 12/7	<p><b><i>Emergency Sex</i></b> (cont.)  Gayatri Spivak, "Righting Wrongs"  Jacques Rancière, "Who is the Subject of the Rights of Man?"</p>