

HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE AMERICAS

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Franklin 230/232 (IMPS classroom)

Tuesdays and Thursdays

10:05 - 11:20 AM

Fall 2007

**Office: 234 Science Building
(Old Art Museum)**

East Campus

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OVERVIEW

This course will introduce students to the concepts, history and practice of human rights, using as its lens Latin America and the activists who have developed and promoted rights in the region. Students will begin with the basic texts that human rights activists use to ground and coordinate their efforts to promote human rights. Through the work of activists, we will examine human rights theory and legal grounding, the development of human rights as a practice, the history of human rights, and the future of human rights as a political, cultural and social force.

Due to the subject matter, some of the materials we will read, view and discuss are of a violent or graphic nature. Students very sensitive to graphic descriptions and images need to consider this before enrolling.

The course is designed to impart some of the skills activists use to further their cause, including public speaking, writing and a group project. The group project is creating a “Day of the Dead”-style altar based on the papers of Rabbi Marshall Meyer, an Argentine human rights activist active against the Dirty War. The Meyer papers are at Duke, and we will be examining and using them to create an altar as part of a larger altar project, coordinated with different campus and community groups.

The altar project will require students to meet and plan outside of class.

Through a special arrangement, the class will be held in the Interactive Multimedia Project Space (IMPS) in the John Hope Franklin Center. In class, we will use the available technology – gaming system, plasma screens, wireless Ethernet and laptops – to augment written class materials.

Students are strongly encouraged to buy and consult frequently E.B. White and William Strunk’s *The Elements of Style*, the best guide for writing in clear, effective prose. To be an advocate for human rights, it is important to write well and convincingly about complex themes and situations. The book is available at the Regulator. It is also on permanent reserve at Perkins (REF: 808.042 S927.E38)

COURSE STRUCTURE

In the first half of the course, we will focus on case examples drawn from the formation of the modern human rights movement, including the creation of race as a category with political implications, Europe’s attitude toward Latin America’s indigenous populations, the British-based campaign to end slavery, and the effect on human rights of the Cold War and its end.

During the second half of the course, we will examine contemporary and emerging human rights issues, including the challenges facing refugees and the internally displaced, indigenous rights, the laws of war in a changing world, the rights of immigrants, truth commissions and human welfare issues, among other things.

We also have guest speakers and outside events. Students are required to attend. If you have scheduling difficulties, please consult me beforehand.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

A team of two students will be assigned a day to present a ten-minute talk related to the day's readings. You will also assist in leading the class discussion. This counts toward the class participation part of your grade.

REQUIREMENTS

A typed response paper of no more than 500 words about the assignments for each week is due on Thursdays. Appearance is important in human rights work, so please take advantage of a spell-check program! It is best to do the readings for the week – and discuss them in your notes – in the order that they appear in the syllabus.

Each student may miss one week's worth of notes, but no late notes will be accepted. If you must miss a Thursday class, please make sure your notes are handed in that Tuesday.

There will be four *pruebas relámpagas*, i.e. pop quizzes, during the course of the semester.

Students are also expected to take part in the design and construction of an altar related to the Marshall Meyer papers at Duke library. This is the mid-term. To prepare, please read *You are my witness: the living words of Rabbi Marshall T. Meyer* in the month of September – we will be referring to this text throughout the class.

A final paper of no more than 10 pages is due as the final. The topic will be related to contemporary issues in human rights in the Americas, and will be assigned after the altar project is completed.

The ability to speak Spanish is not a requirement for the course.

EVALUATION

30 per cent Class notes and class participation

20 per cent Altars project

20 per cent *Pruebas relámpagas* (pop quizzes, based on readings and class discussion)

30 percent Final paper

READINGS

All syllabus material is available through Blackboard or on reserve at Perkins or, in the case of movies, at Lilly. Students are expected to view the films on their own outside of class. Please include comments on the films in weekly class notes.

There are two required books you should purchase (they are also on reserve):

At the Regulator book store on Ninth St.: John Charles Chasteen, *Born in Blood And Fire: A Concise History of Latin America* (New York: W. W. Norton; 2 edition, 2005).

Available used online at Amazon: Marshall T. Meyer, *You are my witness: the living words of Rabbi Marshall T. Meyer*, edited by Jane Isay (New York, N.Y. : St. Martin's Press, 2004).

http://www.amazon.com/You-Are-My-Witness-Marshall/dp/0312328079/ref=sr_1_1/104-8630081-1120705?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1186146275&sr=8-1

Tuesday, August 28 and Thursday, August 30

Micheline R. Ishay, "Human Rights and the Enlightenment," *The History of Human Rights* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 64-116.

Chasteen, "Encounter," *Born in Blood And Fire: A Concise History of Latin America*, pp. 25-53.

The Human Rights Toolbox, <http://www.hrweb.org/legal/undocs.html>. We will consult these documents during the course of the semester:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
- Convention Against Torture
- Convention Against Genocide
- The Geneva Conventions
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

Tuesday, September 4 and Thursday, September 6: Who is Human?

Chasteen, "Colonial Crucible" and both Countercurrents, *Born in Blood And Fire*, pp. 54-89.

John Hemming, "Atahualpa and Pizarro," from *The Peru Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, edited by Orin Starn, Robin Kirk and Carlos Iván Degregori (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 97-118.

Bartolomé de las Casas, "In Defense of the Indians," from *The Peru Reader*, pp. 119-122.

Aguirre, Wrath of God (Lilly Library: DVD 789): The story follows the travels of Lope de Aguirre, a semi-fictionalized character who accompanies Gonzalo Pizarro (played by an actual Peruvian cleric)

into the Amazon in search of the legendary city of gold, El Dorado. The scenery is magnificent and the message powerful – conquering isn't for sissies. The film was shot in the spectacular but unforgiving jungle near the ruins of Machu Picchu. The opening scene was shot just opposite the ruins, as noted in the commentary. The movie has its own rhythm, and you may want to fast forward in spots (but be aware that the look of terror on the faces of the actors set adrift on rafts in the Ucayali River is all too real – Herzog has “tried it himself,” prior to placing his poorly paid actors on real rafts in a real river at real flood stage). Watch until at least 1:10, when the horse is left behind. You may also want to listen to the DVD commentary by Herzog – well worth it.

Tuesday, September 11: Altar Planning

NOTE: Class will meet in the Rare Book Room at Perkins Library on West Campus,
<http://map.duke.edu/?bid=7704>

Special presentation by **Patrick Stawski, Human Rights Archivist, Perkins Library** and a visit to Marshall Meyer papers

Day of the Dead links:

“Day of the Dead” altars at <http://www.dayofthedead.com/index.html>

“Day of the Dead” in Haiti,
<http://www.wehaitians.com/haitians%20celebrate%20day%20of%20the%20dead.html>

YouTube documentary on “Day of the Dead,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pbcdI9cgnZg>

How to make a Day of the Dead altar:
http://gomexico.about.com/od/festivalsholidays/ht/make_altar.htm

Thursday, September 13: Art, memory and human rights

“The True Desaparecidos,” Ariel Dorfman, Chronicle for Higher Education, September 5, 2003,
<http://chronicle.com/free/v50/i02/02b00701.htm>

Juan Gelman, “Somata,” “XIII” and “An open letter to my grandson or granddaughter,” from *Unthinkable Tenderness*, pp. 9, 33, 181-183.

“Grim Fandango,” a computer game (in class)

Tuesday, September 18 and Thursday, September 20: New identities and the Atlantic slave trade

Chasteen, “Postcolonial Blues” and “Progress,” plus both Countercurrents, *Born in Blood And Fire*, pp. 119-178.

Adam Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire's Slaves*, Introduction, Chap. 4 ("King Sugar"), Chap. 18 ("At the Foot of Vesuvius"), Chap. 19 ("Redcoats Graveyard"), Chap. 20 ("These Gilded Africans") pp. 54-68, 256-296.

Edwidge Danticat, "We are ugly, but we are here," in *Women Writing Resistance: Essays on Latin America and the Caribbean* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press), pp. 23-27.

Antislavery International, <http://www.antislavery.org/>

Screening of *Roots*, The Middle Passage episode (in class)

Tuesday, September 25: Altar Planning

"Day of the Dead" altar project: Special presentation by **Pedro Lasch, Artist, Assistant Professor of the Practice of Visual Arts, Art, Art History and Visual Studies**

The Disappeared, edited by Laurel Reuter and with text by Lawrence Weschler. This is a catalog of an exhibition of 14 Latin American visual artists responding to the tens of thousands kidnapped, tortured, killed and "vanished" in Latin America by military dictatorships during the late-1950s to the 1980s. Some of the artists worked in the resistance; some had parents or siblings who were disappeared; others were forced into exile. Please read the text and view the images, some of which we may look at in class.

Thursday, September 27: Independence for whom?

Chasteen, "Independence" and "Postcolonial Blues," in *Born in Blood And Fire: A Concise History of Latin America*, pp. 181-242.

Simón de Bolívar, "Message to the Congress of Angostura, 1819,"
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1819bolivar.html>

Alberto Flores Galindo, "The Rebellion of Túpac Amaru," from *The Peru Reader*, pp. 159-168.

Tuesday, October 2 and Thursday, October 4: The Mexican Revolution

Chasteen, "Progress" and "Neocolonialism" plus Countercurrents, *Born in Blood And Fire*, pp. 149-214.

Martín Luis Guzmán, "Zapatistas in the Palace," from *The Mexico Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, edited by Gilbert Joseph and Timothy J. Henderson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 351-356.

"Pancho Villa: La revolución no ha terminado," a YouTube excerpt,
<http://youtube.com/watch?v=CWwJO70HTZU>

Thursday, October 11: Altar planning

Chasteen, "Nationalism" plus Countercurrents, *Born in Blood And Fire*, pp. 217-246.

Tuesday, October 16 and Thursday, October 18: US Policy and the Cold War

Chasteen, "Revolution" and "Reaction" plus Countercurrents, *Born in Blood And Fire*, pp. 249-309.

Greg Grandin, "How Latin America saved the United States from itself," in *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the rise of the new imperialism* (New York: Owl Books, 2007), pp. 11-51.

Jacobo Timmerman, Chaps. 1, 3 and 6, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, pp. 1-11, 22-31, 60-80.

DEATH SQUADRONS: THE FRENCH SCHOOL (Lilly Library, 4174) reveals that French veterans of the wars in Indochina and Algeria provided the inspiration, the training, and some of the intelligence that allowed Latin America's dictators to torture and kill thousands of their own citizens. Filmmaker Marie-Monique Robin traces the development of the theory of counter-revolutionary warfare, first tested in Indochina and in Algiers (where 20,000 civilians died).

Tuesday, October 23 and Thursday, October 25: Drug War and Human Rights

Robin Kirk, "The Magic Kingdom," in *More Terrible than Death: Massacres, Drugs and America's War in Colombia* (New York: Public Affairs, 2003), pp. 223-258.

"Below the Radar: U.S. military programs with Latin America, 1997-2007," a report by the Latin America Working Group, http://www.lawg.org/docs/below_the_radar_eng.pdf (Blackboard)

"Drug Gangs Use Violence to Sway Guatemala Vote," by Marc Lacey, New York Times, August 4, 2007,

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/04/world/americas/04guatemala.html?_r=1&th=&oref=slogin&emc=t&pagewanted=all (Blackboard)

"Drug Wars," a Frontline special, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/drugs/>

Clear and Present Danger (Lilly, DVD 1670): Based on a Tom Clancy novel, the movie follows superspook Jack Ryan as he deals with an unconstitutional "war on drugs" -- fought with U.S. soldiers -- gone awry. Ryan uncovers a secret US operation in the thinly veiled Colombia just as the troops are abandoned, and he realizes he's being set up to take the fall. Can Ryan save the soldiers, save himself and save the day? Although this movie deals with

Altar preparation

Tuesday, October 30:

Game day

Thursday's class is rescheduled for Wednesday, October 31 12:00 to 1:30 pm

The class will meet in the John Hope Franklin Center Room 240, from noon-1:30 pm

Patricia Valdez, the director of the Argentina-based “Memoria Abierta” physical and digital memorial to the dirty war, will speak. Memoria Abierta is a ground-breaking effort to not only collect and display objects from Argentina’s period of state terrorism, but also to use memory-gathering activities as a way to strengthen a social conscience that values active memory and influences Argentine political culture and the construction of identity and the strengthening of democracy.

Thursday, November 1: NO CLASS

Tuesday, November 6 and Thursday, November 8: Immigration and human rights

Special presentation by Tony Macias, Student Action with Farmworkers

De Nadie (Lilly Library: DVD 8186): This documentary chronicles how several Central American immigrants -- armed with nothing but hope and the dream of a better life – make a 1,300-mile trek through Mexico to the United States. An intimate look at immigration, De Nadie lets politics take a backseat to the resonant narratives of those struggling to survive a journey marked by hardship and hypocrisy.

Tuesday, November 13 and Thursday, November 15: “War on Terror”

Juan Mendez, “Torture in Latin America,” in *Torture: Does it make us safer? Is it ever OK?* (New York: The New Press, 2005), pp. 55-68.

WOLA report, “Venezuela after the Re-Election of Hugo Chávez: Conference Rapporteur's Report,” <http://www.wola.org/media/WOLA-Venezuela%20Conference%20July%202007%20FINAL.pdf> (Blackboard)

Gimena Sanchez-Garzoli, “The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement: Their Use and Application in the Americas,” International Seminar: Experiences of Displaced Populations in Colombia, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Peru, March 26, 2003, <http://www.brook.edu/FP/projects/IDP/articles/peru20030326.pdf> (Blackboard)

Tuesday, November 27 and Thursday, November 29: Truth, Justice and Reconciliation

Salomón Lerner, “Time of Reckoning,” from *The Peru Reader*, pp. 401-409.

Caroline Yezer, “Who Wants to Know? Suspicious Rumors and Villager’s Opposition to Truth Telling in Ayacucho,” in the *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* (Blackboard)

Paul Farmer, “On Suffering and Structural Violence: A View from Below,” pp. 281-289.

Death and the Maiden (Lilly Library, DVD 3617): Fifteen years ago, Paulina Escobar had her life shattered when she was taken prisoner and tortured by a sadistic doctor. Now, through a chance

encounter, she may have found the man responsible for her nightmares and tonight he's going to pay. But how far will she go to get even? And how can she be sure, after so many years, that she has found the right man?

Tuesday, December 4 AND Thursday, December 6 Challenges ahead

Chasteen, "Neoliberalism," *Born in Blood And Fire*, pp. 311-329.

José Miguel Vivanco, "Restraint, not force, will bring change to Cuba," *Financial Times*, <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/12/22/cuba14925.htm> (Blackboard)

Zapatista Web site: <http://www.zmag.org/chiapas1/index.htm>

A Place Called Chiapas (film excerpts viewed in class)

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

Students interested in web resources on human rights may find the following sites helpful. This list is not exhaustive, but should give students an idea of the kinds of resources available; most contain links to other sites and you are strongly encouraged to wander.

<http://www.amnesty.org/> (Amnesty International)

<http://www.hrw.org/> (Human Rights Watch)

<http://www.unhchr.ch/> (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights)

<http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home> (UN High Commissioner for Refugees)

<http://www.un.org/icty/> (International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia)

<http://www.ictj.org/> (International Center for Transitional Justice)

<http://www.antislavery.org/>, Anti-Slavery International

Latin America

<http://www.wola.org/>, Washington Office on Latin America

<http://www.lawg.org/>, Latin America Working Group

http://www.brook.edu/index/taxonomy.htm?taxonomy=Politics%2C%20Global*Humanitarian%20issues%20and%20human%20rights, The Brookings Institution

<http://www.heritage.org/research/latinamerica/>, The Heritage Foundation

Online research resources:

[*Human Rights Quarterly*](#)

[*Human Rights Dialogue*](#)

[UN Human Development Report](#)

[Minnesota Human Rights Library](#)

[Project DIANA at Yale University](#)

[Women's Human Rights Resources](#)

[U.S. State Department Country Reports on Human Rights](#)

[UN page for the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights](#)

[5 Year Review of the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights](#)

[Foreign Affairs Online \(links to sites in international law, human rights, and the UN\)](#)