

Spring 2022  
HIS 371-01 Human Rights in Asia  
Classroom N3110  
Prof. Weiwei Luo  
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### Course Description:

Few things are more prominent in contemporary political discourse than discussions of human rights. But which ideals are included at the core of this concept and what kinds of practices give it expression? This seminar explores the historical origins and development of human rights thinking and politics in the West and Asia by analyzing the intellectual, legal, and political background of the concept of human rights. To begin, the course seeks to understand how and why humanity as a whole came to be valued in the West, and then examine the parallel or similar development in Asian cultures, with a sensitivity to the politics of comparison. This course explores what it means to think historically about a concept that today is taken for granted and whose existence seems natural. The goal will be to produce a research paper on a topic concerning the history of human rights in Asia.

### Books

Samuel Moyn. *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*

Other readings will be provided on Pweb as PDFs

### Requirements

- a) The seminar paper (50%.) This paper will be a 20-30-page research paper (6000-7500 words) based on work with primary and secondary sources. Detailed grading rubric will be posted under Assignments on PWeb.
- b) Class participation (30%.) You are expected to attend class on time and participate actively throughout the semester. All readings are to be completed prior to the class period for which they have been assigned. You should come to class prepared to discuss them in detail.
- c) Paper proposal

90-92% A-  
87-89% B+

80-82% B-  
77-79% C+

60-69% D  
below 60% F

## Policies

## Schedule

(Reading assignments are subject to change)

### Section 1 Introduction

Jan 24 Introduction to Class

Syllabus

Jan 26 The “Who” “Why” and “What” of Writing

You are writing a research paper... what does that mean?

Watch the linked video on “expert writing” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vtIzMaLkCaM>)  
Or

Watch the linked video on “History, Identity, Politics and the Art of Writing”  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aiIKTkGFK7s>)

### Section 2 Foundational Concepts

Jan 31 Do Human Rights Have/Need a History?

Summary of Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights* (PDF)

Video of Lynn Hunt: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7pD6Oogdeg&list=WL&index=2&t=280s>)

Begin reading: Sam Moyn, *The Last Utopia* (Please read at least the first two chapters)

Feb 2 Critique of Human Rights in Western History

Finish reading: Sam Moyn, *The Last Utopia*

### Section 3 Cultural Relativism and Comparative Values

Feb 7 “Work Differently Day” No Class

Feb 9 Human Rights and Asian Values?

Benedict Anderson. "Chapter 4: Frameworks of Comparison." In *A Life Beyond Boundaries*  
Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations" and response by F. Ajami

Feb 14 Human Rights and Asian Values?

Amartya Sen, "Human Rights and Asian Values"

Choose One: response to Sen by either Daniel A. Bell or by Leigh Jenco

Stephen Angle, *Confucian Human Rights(excerpt)* and \*optional: response by Metzger

\*The Universal Declaration

Optional:

Elizabeth Perry, "Chinese Conceptions of Rights: From Mencius to Mao and Now"

#### Section4 Women's Rights are Human Rights

Feb 16 General Considerations

Gayle Binion, "Human Rights: A Feminist Perspective." *Human Rights Quarterly*,

Hilary Charlesworth. "What are 'Women's International Human Rights"

Feb 21 Geographical and Cultural Differences

\*Case finding exercise

Samples(optional):

Human Rights Watch. *Marry Before Your House is Swept Away: Child Marriage in Bangladesh*.  
New York: HRW, 2015.

Land Watch Asia. "Issue Brief: Women's Land Rights in Asia." Philippines: Asian NGO  
Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC), 2015.

#### Section5 Power, Personhood and the Body

Feb 23 Theoretical Underpinnings

Michel Foucault, "Right of Death and Power over Life," *History of Sexuality*

Thomas Lemke, "The Government of Living Beings", in ~~*Bio*~~*Politics: An Advanced Introduction*

\*Optional:

G. Agamben, "Introduction", "The Politization of Life", "Biopolitics and the Rights of Man",  
*Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, (Stanford, 1998)

Thomas Lemke, Sovereign Power and Bare Life ~~*Bio*~~*Politics: An Advanced Introduction*

Feb 28 "Biopower" in action

Richard Baxtrom, "Governmentality, Bio-

Liu Xiaobo, *No Enemies, No Hatred* (Excerpt)

Louisa Lim. "Introduction," "Student," "Chengdu," and "Afterword." *The People's Republic of Amnesia: Tiananmen Revisited*.

March 14 East Asia after WWII

Mikyong Kim, *Memory and Reconciliation in East Asia* (excerpt)

Joshua Fogel: *The Nanjing Massacre in History and Historiography* (excerpt)

March 16 Cold War Legacies

Film Screening: *The Act of Killing*

Spring Break (March 19-April 3)

Weeks 9-13: Individual and Small Group Meetings(to be scheduled)

Week 14: In Class Presentations

Final Paper due on Friday, May 20, noon