

Questions in International Thought

~~Fridays 14:00–16:00, Seminarhaus 4.104~~

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... NOT THE FINAL VERSION: CHECK FOR UPDATES ...

The Main Idea

This proseminar will provide an introduction to some key questions and debates in international political theory. Can we speak of “laws,” “justice,” or “morality” beyond the sovereign state? Do states and their citizens have obligations to foreigners, other societies, or even the world as a whole? Can military force be a legitimate means for pursuing these obligations? Is talk of “human rights” or “universal morality” ever anything more than an extension of Western imperialism? In this seminar, we will examine various aspects of debates in three key topics: human rights, just war theory, and postcolonialism.

Progress and Assessment

Format of the course: This is an online course, and all readings, lectures, discussion spaces, assignments, and other learning materials will be available on **Moodle**: <https://moodle.studiumdigitale.uni-frankfurt.de/moodle/course/view.php?id=608>.

- All required texts (“primary readings”) for the course will be available at the start of the semester, as well a number of additional readings (“secondary readings”) that you may find useful.
- In addition to the readings, you will find variety of learning materials to guide you through them. These will typically include some form of recorded lecture, and may also include webpages, handouts, or links. These will be made available by the beginning of each week.

- Our primary medium for discussing the materials will be via the chat forums. Each week will have a dedicated discussion thread, and 2 to 4 students will act as “discussion leaders” for that week’s primary readings.

Overview of requirements:

	<i>Teilnahmeschein</i>	<i>Leistungsschein</i>
Weekly primary readings	required	required
Participation in online forum (via Moodle)	recommended	required
Act as forum “discussion leader” for one week	required	required
Midterm exam	write 1250 to 1750-word response to one question on <i>either</i> the mid-term <i>or</i> the final	write 1250 to 1750-word response to one question
Final exam		write 2700 to 3300-word response to one question

Both students pursuing a *Teilnahmeschein* and students pursuing a *Leistungsschein* are expected to:

- Keep pace with the weekly primary readings;
- Participate regularly in online forum discussions;
- Play role of “discussion leader” (along with a few other classmates) in the online forum for at least one week’s primary reading.
- The course will feature a short mid-term exam and a final exam. Each exam will consist of a list of essay questions that students will complete at home.
 - Those pursuing a *Teilnahmeschein* will write *one essay* of 1250 to 1750 words (\approx 4–6 pages) in response to one question in *either* the mid-term *or* the final exam, using the readings from the course.
 - Those pursuing a *Leistungsschein* will take both the mid-term and the final exam.
 - For the mid-term exam, students must write an essay of 1250 to 1750 words (\approx 4–6 pages) in response to one question, using the readings from the course.
 - For the final exam, students must write one essay of 2700 to 3300 words (\approx 9–11 pages) in response to one question, drawing upon the readings from the course *and independent research*.

Weekly Readings: As you look over the syllabus, you will notice a list of readings for each week. Don’t get nervous—you will not be asked to read all of them! The readings for each week are divided into several categories:

- *Primary readings:* The “primary reading” will be the main focus of that week’s lecture and discussion. Each week’s primary reading will typically be 25-40 pages long in total, though not always. It is expected that everyone will have read and will arrive to class ready to discuss the primary reading for each session. I have marked these readings in the syllabus with two stars (★★) so that they can be found easily.
- *Secondary readings:* For a number of our sessions, you can expect to find a handful of “secondary readings” listed after that week’s primary reading, which may be relevant to the issues raised or offer a differing perspective. These readings will be marked in the syllabus with one star (★). You are not required to read them on a weekly basis, but some of them may come in useful for answering the exam questions.
- *Supplementary readings:* For those of you who find a particular week’s reading compelling, most weeks will also include recommendations for further reading. These may include other works by the author of the primary reading, in-depth interpretations of the author’s work, philosophical works by others that are often studied alongside the author, or contemporary attempts to grapple with issues related to the ones the author raises. Again, these lists will cover but a snippet of what is really out there, but these should help you begin your journey. These will often be full-length books; as such, they will not be made available on the course website

Forum Discussions and Discussion Leaders: Because we will be conducting the course online, our primary medium for discussing the weekly readings will be via the online forums on Moodle.

- Each week, a new discussion thread will be opened on the coming week’s reading.
- *Discussion Leaders:* Several students (about 2-4) will act as “discussion leaders” for that week. Everyone in the class must act as a discussion leader *at least once* to receive credit. As a discussion leader, your job will be to initiate the discussion, pose questions to the rest of the class, keep the discussion going, and serve as moderators for the week.
- *Forum Participation:* Regardless of whether you are a discussion leader for a given week, all students are expected to participate regularly in the forums. You do *not* have to contribute every week; however, you should contribute frequently enough to show that you are following along in the class.
 - Quality contributions should demonstrate that you have done the week’s reading and are trying to think about the issues they raise. They can involve asking questions about the reading or answering questions posed by others; they can involve raising points of agreement or (respectful!) disagreement with points made by me or others.
 - Quality contributions are not about being “right.” They are about figuring things out, realizing what you might have missed, correcting mistakes and misinterpretations, and being confronted with perspectives you may not have previously considered.

- Above all, quality contributions should be on topic, and they should be polite and respectful of other students' views and backgrounds.
- Though participation is required, your primary goal should not be to "impress" me or your fellow classmates. On the contrary, you should see the forums as an opportunity to think about the texts, experiment with ideas and arguments, and ask for clarifications.

Exams: There will be two written, take-home exams. Each exam will consist of a list of essay questions; students taking the exam are required to write a response to one. The questions will be distributed *at least* 10 days in advance of the deadline.

- *Midterm exam:* Questions for the midterm exam will be based on the readings of the first five sessions (Human Rights I–V). Students taking the exam are to write a response to one and only one question.
 - Students taking the class for *Teilnahme* credit may choose whether they want to take the midterm exam *or* write a similar essay for the final exam. Students taking the class for a *Leistungsschein* must take both exams.
 - The essay should be 1250 to 1750 words (\approx 4–6 pages) in length.
 - Your response must take the form of a complete essay. It should begin with a clear statement of your argument, it should be structured in a way that allows for a systematic, step-by-step development and defense of your argument, and it should end with a concluding paragraph or two that reiterates your main points.
 - Your response should draw upon the primary readings (★★) and, where necessary, secondary readings (★) from the syllabus. Independent research is permitted but not required.
 - *All sources, including class readings, articles, books, websites, my lectures, forum postings, and course materials found on Moodle, must be properly cited* (A handout with examples of proper citation will be provided).
- *Final exam:* Questions for the final exam will cover the entire course. Students taking the exam are to write a response to one and only one question.
 - Students taking the class for *Teilnahme* credit, who choose to take this exam, should write an essay of 1250 to 1750 words that follows the same format as the midterm exam (see above). Independent research is permitted but not required. *All sources, including course materials, must be properly cited.*
 - For students taking the class for a *Leistungsschein*:
 - You must write one essay of 2700 to 3300 words (\approx 9–11 pages) in response to one question.
 - Your response should draw upon both the course readings and independent research. In addition to the primary readings (★★) and, where necessary, secondary readings (★), you should cite *a minimum of three scholarly sources* found independently.

- “Scholarly sources” may include academic books and journal articles, as well as legal documents, NGO reports, and official government documents.
 - You are permitted to cite newspaper articles, websites, and other sources, but they will not count toward the minimum.
 - If you have questions about what does and does not count as a “scholarly source” for the purposes of the final exam
- Your response must take the form of a complete essay. It should begin with a clear statement of your argument, it should be structured in a way that allows for a systematic, step-by-step development and defense of your argument, and it should end with a concluding paragraph or two that reiterates your main points.
 - *All sources, including class readings, articles, books, websites, my lectures, forum postings, and course materials found on Moodle, must be properly cited* (A handout with examples of proper citation will be provided).
- *Grading of exams:* All exams will be graded on a 100-point scale. See below for a table of how the points translate into full grades.
 - *Completion of assignment.* Up to 50 points will be awarded on the basis of how completely you fulfill the requirements of the exam: that you answered the question fully, that you made sufficient use of the primary and (where appropriate) secondary readings, that you did the necessary independent research for the final, and so on.
 - *Comprehension of material.* Up to 15 points will be awarded on the basis of how well you make use of the material provided for reading, display an understanding of the major ideas and arguments of the authors we have read in class, and are able to explain and apply them in one’s own words.
 - *Formulation and defense of argument.* Up to 15 points will be awarded on the basis of how well you put forward a clear thesis in response to your chosen question and are able to defend that thesis in an organized way, using solid reasoning and evidence.
 - *Clear writing.* Up to 12 points will be awarded for clear, concise, and well-organized writing. You should strive to organize your paper into well-structured paragraphs, write in clear sentences, use clear phrasing, avoid errors in spelling and grammar, and use proper and sufficient citation.
 - *Critical thinking.* Up to 8 points will be awarded on the basis of your ability to identify the strengths, weaknesses, usefulness, and limits of the ideas and arguments presented by the authors covered in class, and to think creatively and offer original perspectives on the issues and problems we discuss.

••• IMPORTANT •••

All papers must be double-spaced, in 12-point type, with one-inch margins, and must be submitted to me via email as either a Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) or Adobe PDF (.pdf) file at **brian.m.milstein@gmail.com**.

Unfortunately, I will not be able to accept papers not written in English.

For all papers, you will be expected to adhere to proper conventions of scholarly attribution. Any work quoted or otherwise referenced must be appropriately and fully cited. Any idea, argument, information, or quotation that you might employ from an external source must likewise be accompanied by full citation. You are free to use any standard bibliographic citation style you wish, but you should apply it consistently. **Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and may result in automatic failure of the course.**

Grading for the *Leistungsschein*: Your grade will be tabulated based on a 100-point scale. Of these 100 points, up to 10 will be awarded based on active and thoughtful forum participation, up to 15 will be awarded for your contribution as a discussion leader, up to 30 for the midterm exam (your score × 30%), and up to 50 for the final exam (your score × 50%). The grading scale will be as follows:

97,0	≤ 1,0	43,5 – 49,5	= 3,7
90,0 – 96,5	= 1,3	37,0 – 43,0	= 4,0
83,5 – 89,5	= 1,7	30,0 – 36,5	= 4,3
77,0 – 83,0	= 2,0	23,5 – 29,5	= 4,7
70,0 – 76,5	= 2,3	17,0 – 23,0	= 5,0
63,5 – 69,5	= 2,7	10,0 – 16,5	= 5,3
57,0 – 63,0	= 3,0	3,5 – 9,5	= 5,7
50,0 – 56,5	= 3,3	3,0	≥ 6,0

(Note that the maximum possible score is 105)

Weekly Readings

All required readings for the course will be made available online, as well as at least some of the suggested supplementary readings (which will be indicated with an [online](#) icon).

••• PLEASE NOTE: The readings listed may be subject to change, and additional supplementary readings may be added or made available over the course of the term.

Check periodically for updated versions of this syllabus. •••

13-19 April / START OF TERM DELAYED**Week 1 (20-26 April) / Human Rights I****★★ Primary reading:**

- Eric Posner (2014) "The Case against Human Rights," *The Guardian*, 4 December <<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2014/dec/04/-sp-case-against-human-rights>>. [online](#)

★ Secondary reading:

- *The Declaration of Independence* (1776) <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/declare.asp>.
- *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* (1789) <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rightsof.asp>.
- *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/unrights.asp>.

Supplementary reading:

- Samuel Moyn (2010) *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

27 April-3 May / NO CLASS**Week 2 (4-10 May) / Human Rights II****★★ Primary reading:**

- Hannah Arendt (1968 [1951]) *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, new ed. (New York: Harcourt). Pp267-302. [online](#)

★ Secondary reading:

- Seyla Benhabib (1999) "Hannah Arendt and the 'Right to Have Rights,'" *Hannah Arendt Newsletter* 2(1): 5-14. [online](#)
- Jacques Rancière (2004) "Who Is the Subject of the Rights of Man?" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103(2/3): 297-310. [online](#)

Supplementary reading:

- Ayten Gündoğdu (2015) *Rightlessness in an Age of Rights: Hannah Arendt and the Contemporary Struggles of Migrants* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Week 3 (11–17 May) / Human Rights III**★★ Primary reading:**

- Michael Ignatieff (2014 [2000]) *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry*, in Mark Matheson (ed), *The Tanner Lectures in Human Values* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press). Pp285–349. [online](#)

★ Secondary reading:

- Joshua Cohen (2006) “Is There a Human Right to Democracy?” in Christine Sypnowich (ed), *The Egalitarian Conscience: Essays in Honour of G.A. Cohen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press). Pp226–48. [online](#)
- Kenneth Baynes (2009) “Toward a Political Conception of Human Rights,” *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 35(4): 371–90. [online](#)

Supplementary reading:

- Charles R. Beitz (2009) *The Idea of Human Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Week 4 (18–24 May) / Human Rights IV**★★ Primary reading:**

- Jürgen Habermas (2001) “Remarks on Legitimation through Human Rights” in Max Pensky (ed), *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press). Pp113–29. [online](#)

★ Secondary reading:

- Rainer Forst (2014) “The Justification of Human Rights and the Basic Right to Justification: A Reflexive Approach” in *Justification and Critique* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press). Pp38–48. [online](#)

Supplementary reading

- Seyla Behnabib (2011) “Is There a Human Right to Democracy? Beyond Interventionism and Indifference” in *Dignity in Adversity: Human Rights in Troubled Times* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press). Pp77–93.

Week 5 (25–31 May) / Human Rights V**★★ Primary reading:**

- James D. Ingram (2008) “What Is a ‘Right to Have Rights’? Three Images of the Politics of Human Rights,” *American Political Science Review* 102(4): 401–416. [online](#)

★ Secondary reading:

- Sofia Näsström (2014) “The Right to Have Rights: Democratic, Not Political,” *Political Theory* 42(5): 543–68. [online](#)

Supplementary reading

- James D. Ingram (2013) *Radical Cosmopolitics: The Ethics and Politics of Democratic Universalism* (New York: Columbia University Press).

Week 6 (1–7 June) / Just War Theory I

★★ Primary reading:

- Michael Walzer (2006 [1977]) *Just and Unjust Wars*, 4th ed. (New York: Basic Books). Pp3–47. [online](#)

★ Secondary reading:

- Seth Lazar (2016) “War,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/war/>>.

Supplementary reading:

- Helen Frowe (2016) *The Ethics of War and Peace: An Introduction* (London: Routledge).

Week 7 (8–14 June) / Just War Theory II

★★ Primary reading:

- Cécile Fabre (2008) “Cosmopolitanism, Just War Theory, and Legitimate Authority,” *International Affairs* 84(5): 963–76. [online](#)

★ Secondary reading:

- Jeff McMahan (2006) “The Ethics of Killing in War,” *Philosophia* 34(1): 23–41. [online](#)
- Cécile Fabre (2016) *Cosmopolitan Peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press). Pp1–52. [online](#)

Supplementary reading:

- Cécile Fabre (2012) *Cosmopolitan War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

••• Mid-term exam due Monday, 15 June, at 17:00 •••

Week 8 (15–21 June) / Just War Theory III

★★ Primary reading:

- Mary Kaldor (2007) “From Just War to Just Peace” in Charles Reed and David Ryall (ed), *The Price of Peace: Just War in the Twenty-First Century*. Pp255–73. [online](#)

★ Secondary reading:

- Shannon D. Beebe and Mary Kaldor (2010) *The Ultimate Weapon is No Weapon: Human Security and the New Rules of War and Peace* (New York: PublicAffairs). Pp79–137. [online](#)

Supplementary reading:

- Mary Kaldor (2007) *Human Security: Reflections on Globalization and Intervention* (Cambridge, UK: Polity).
- Mary Kaldor (2012) *New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Global Era*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Polity).

Week 9 (22–28 June) / Postcolonialism I

★★ Primary reading:

- Amilcar Cabral (1979) *Unity and Struggle: Speeches and Writings*, trans. Michael Wolfers (New York: Monthly Review Press). Pp28–44, 119–37 [“Unity and Struggle” and “Presuppositions and Objectives of National Liberation in Relation to Social Structure”]. [online](#)

★ Secondary reading:

- Amilcar Cabral (1979) *Unity and Struggle: Speeches and Writings*, trans. Michael Wolfers (New York: Monthly Review Press). Pp138–54 [“National Liberation and Culture”]. [online](#)
- Franz Fanon (1967 [1952]) *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (London: Pluto Press). Pp1–7, 82–108. [online](#)
- Franz Fanon (2004 [1962]) *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press). Pp97–144 [“The Trials and Tribulations of National Consciousness”]. [online](#)

Supplementary reading:

- Ania Loomba (1998) *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge).
- Partha Chatterjee (1993) *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).
- Edward W. Said (1993) *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage).
- Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) *Provincializing Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Week 10 (29 June–5 July) / Postcolonialism II

★★ Primary reading:

- Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1984) “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” *boundary 2* 12(3): 333–58. [online](#)

★ Secondary reading:

- Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) "Under Western Eyes' Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles," *Signs* 8(2): 499–535. [online](#)
- Uma Narayan (1997) *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third-World Feminism* (New York: Routledge). Pp1–41. [online](#)

Supplementary reading:

- Susan Moller Okin et al (1999) *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).
- Seyla Benhabib (2002) *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Week 11 (6–12 July) / Postcolonialism III

★★ Primary reading:

- Aníbal Quijano (2000) "Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America," *International Sociology* 15(2): 215–32. [online](#)

Week 12 (13–19 July) / Postcolonialism IV

★★ Primary reading:

- Achille Mbembé (2003) "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15(1): 11–40. [online](#)

★ Secondary reading:

- Achille Mbembé (1992) "Provisional Notes on the Postcolony," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 62(1): 3–37. [online](#)

Supplementary reading:

- Achille Mbembé (2019) *Necropolitics*, trans. Steve Corcoran (Durham, NC: Duke University Press).
- Giorgio Agamben (1998) *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press).
- Banu Bargu (2014) *Starve and Immolate: The Politics of Human Weapons* (New York: Columbia University Press).

••• Final exam due Friday, 31 July, at 17:00 •••