PT 358 Critical Human Rights and Humanitarian Advocacy/
Scholars at Risk

Seminar Leader: Prof. Kerry Bystrom
Course Times: MW 15:45-17:15
Email: k.bystrom@berlin.bard.edu
Office Hours: W 10:30-12:00

Course Description
8 ECTS-4 US credits. This seminar serves as an introduction to human rights and humanitarian advocacy, with a practical component. Half of the course (Mondays) focuses on the history and theory of human rights and humanitarian advocacy: what are the bases, overlaps and differences of human rights and humanitarianism? What is it to make claims for human rights, or to denounce suffering or rights violation, especially on behalf of others? How and when and why have individuals and groups spoken out, mounted campaigns, published reports and exposés? How do they address, challenge, and sometimes work with governments and international organizations like the United Nations, particularly through transnational advocacy networks? What allows some campaigns to succeed while others fail? As we look at humanitarian and human rights advocacy from the campaign to abolish the slave trade to the advent of digital activism, this half of the course serves as an introduction to human rights work as a mode of legal, political and cultural practice. The other half of the course (Wednesdays) involves hands-on work with the human rights organization Scholars at Risk (SAR) to support detained and disappeared Uyghur scholars in China. We will research events and individuals, communicate with families and lawyers and other advocates, write country and case profiles, propose strategies and tactics for pressuring governments and other powerful actors, and develop appeals to public opinion -- all while recognizing the ethical and political risks this work may involve.

This seminar is an Open Society University Network (OSUN) course that connects seminars in Bard Annandale (taught by Prof. Thomas Keenan), Al-Quds Bard (taught by Prof. Jana Lozanoska) and American University of Central Asia (taught by Prof. Saniya Toktogazieva). A number of activities including the creation of an information archive and the coordination of advocacy campaigns will take place across these campuses. Working collegially and responsibly with network peers is an important part of the course.

Readings
The following books are required for this class. Students should obtain their own copies or use the reserve copies in the library:

- Adam Hochschild, Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free Empire’s Slaves, Houghton, Mifflin Harcourt, 2005
  

Additional required readings will be available as PDF files in our dedicated Google Classroom [GC].

**Platforms and technology**

Google classroom will be the main Learning Management System (LMS) for the class. Online lectures will take place via Zoom. We will also have a cross-network Padlet space where we post responses to common readings and guest lectures, as well as create a repository of information about the Uyghur cases. It is important that you can connect to these platforms and you should plan to access them regularly. Your advocacy groups may additionally decide to work together via other social media platforms (WhatsApp etc).

**Requirements**

- Come to every class meeting, having read the assigned material thoroughly and preferably more than once, and participate actively in our discussions
- Thoughtfully complete all informal assignments including posting responses to readings and lectures on the course Padlet site.
- Write two short (3 pp) essays focused on important themes in the course
- Together with your colleagues at BCB and the other OSUN network campuses, design and carry out an action project for your SAR case and document this project in a final action portfolio

**Attendance and Participation**

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation. After this, in order for an absence not to impact a student’s participation grade, medical documentation must be provided to your professor and any assigned make-up work completed. *Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences, whether excused or unexcused. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.*

*SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FALL 2020:* Some students might need to begin the semester remotely due to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. In addition, all students and instructors must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. If you are unable to attend class in person because of COVID-related reasons, please notify me immediately and make plans to join the class remotely by teleconference. In the case that you are unable to join by teleconference, I will assign make-up work.

Please note: Whether you are attending class in person or online, the success of this class is dependent not only on you actually being present but also 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. As noted above, you will also be asked to create posts for our network Padlet at least three times across the semester. You are expected to engage in all of these activities; failure to do so will impact your class participation grade.

Formal Assignments

**Essays:** Students will write two critical essays of 3pp each. The first is due on Friday October 2. The second is due on Friday November 27. I will provide further information about each essay closer to the deadlines.

**SAR Advocacy Work and Portfolio:** Over the course of the semester, and in groups, you will research and produce a set of actions to support your imprisoned scholar. Actions might include: writing draft letters of appeal and approaching government officials to adopt these letters; conducting social media campaigns to raise awareness about the scholar’s situation; holding campus teach-ins or letter-writing parties; writing op-eds about the scholar and your own efforts to raise awareness about the case (for student or local paper or other); approaching other NGOs or associations to ask for their involvement on the case; screening or creating short films or podcasts raising awareness about the scholar; etc. Each group must submit an action plan by Friday October 9. All actions must be completed by Friday December 5. In the last week of the semester, each group will hand in all written (and other) materials produced for the case. Additionally, each student must write a short (3 pp) reflection paper (connecting your actions to at least one major theoretical question raised by course and engaging with at least 2 course readings). This together constitutes your Final Action Portfolio.

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](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 or projects 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 including informal assignments: 20% (10% first half of course, 10% second half of course)
Paper #1: 25%
Paper #2: 25%
SAR advocacy group project and action portfolio: 30%

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

Week One
Monday August 31: Introduction
Reading:

Wednesday Sept 2:
Guest speaker: Scholars at Risk staff member (via Zoom link)
Reading:
- Watch https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/resources/introducing-scholars-risk/
- Subscribe to SAR’s Academic Freedom Monitoring Report: https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/academic-freedom-media-review-archive/

Informal Assignment: Group #1 posts questions/response to the speaker on our shared Padlet

Week Two
Monday Sept 7
Humanitarianism and Human Rights
Reading:
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights GC
- Advocates, Ch. 2 “Human Rights Background”
- Wilson and Brown, Humanitarianism Introduction, pp. 1-30

Weds Sept 9
Threatened Scholar Guest Speaker (via Zoom link)
Readings TBC
Informal Assignment: Group #2 posts questions/response to the speaker on our shared Padlet

Week Three
Monday September 14
Genealogy of Humanitarian and Human Rights Advocacy
Readings:
  ● Hochschild, *Bury the Chains*, read pp. 1-8 (Introduction), skim 9-84 (Chs 1-10), read 85-163 (Chs 6-11)

Wednesday Sept 16
SAR and the Uyghur Cases: Background dossier and/or bibliography
*Informal Assignment: All students are required to post on Padlet by Wednesday 12:00 both 1) a summary (approx. 350 words) of the main points relevant to our case from one reading and 2) one continuing question about the context or cases you’d like to explore further*

Week Four
Monday September 21
Genealogy II
Readings:
  ● Hochschild, *Bury the Chains*, pp. 165-296 (Chs 12-20)

Weds Sept 23
Guest speaker TBC, readings TBC (via Zoom link)
*Informal Assignment: Group #3 posts questions/response to the speaker on our shared Padlet*

Week Five
Monday September 28
Genealogy III
Readings:
  ● Hochschild, *Bury the Chains*, pp. 297-366 (Ch 21-23, Epilogue)

Wednesday September 30
Film Screening and Discussion: 10 Conditions of Love
*Informal Assignment: Group #1 posts questions/response to the speaker on our shared Padlet*

**Friday Oct 2: Essay #1 due**

Week Six
Monday Oct 5
Modern Human Rights Work: The Case of Amnesty International
Reading:
  ● “The History of Amnesty International” GC
  ● Hopgood, *Keepers of the Flame*, Chs. 1 and 2

Wednesday Oct 7 advocacy work day

**Friday Oct 9: Action plans due**

Week Seven
Monday Oct 12
Amnesty International II
Readings:
  ● Hopgood, Keepers of the Flame, Chs.3-4

Wednesday October 14
Guest speaker TBC, readings TBC (via Zoom link)
Informal Assignment: Group #2 posts questions/response to the speaker on our shared Padlet

FALL BREAK (October 19, 21)

Week Eight
Monday October 26
Modern Transnational Networks and the Global-Local Nexus
Readings:

Wednesday October 28  Advocacy work day

Week Nine
Monday November 2
Narrative and Voice in Human Rights Activism and Law
Readings:

Wednesday November 4
Guest speaker TBC, readings TBC
Informal Assignment: Group #3 posts questions/response to the speaker on our shared Padlet

Week Ten
Monday November 9
The Ethics of Representing and Speaking for Others
Readings:
    https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843/
● Watch “Kony 2012” at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4MnpzG5Sqc

Wednesday November 11 advocacy work day

Week Eleven
Monday November 16
Human Rights Reports
Readings:
● Advocates, ch. 3,6 GC
● Dudai, “Can You Describe This? Human Rights Reports and What They Tell Us About the Human Rights Movement,” in Wilson and Brown, *Humanitarianism* pp. 245-264

Wednesday November 18 advocacy work day

Week Twelve
Monday November 23
Indifference, Denial, Blindness?
Readings:
● Cohen, “Ch 6: Bystander States” in *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering*, pp 141-167 GC

Wednesday November 25 advocacy work day

Friday November 27: Paper #2 due

Week Thirteen
Monday November 30
Mobilizing Shame (and Its Limits)
Readings:
● Advocates, Ch 7

Wednesday December 2 advocacy work day

Friday December 5: Actions completed

Week Fourteen
Monday December 7
Forensics and Counter-forensics
Readings:

Wednesday December 9
Wrap up and advocacy/action presentations

Completion Week (December 14.16)

**Final Portfolios due Monday December 14**