

HR/ANTH 233: Problems in Human Rights
John Ryle

This course approaches a set of practical and ethical human rights issues through the study of historical and contemporary campaigns, starting with the British anti-slavery movement of the 18th and 19th centuries. The emphasis is on practical questions of strategy and organization and the problems that arise from these. What were the challenges that early campaigners faced? How did they resolve them? What alliances of interest did they confront? And what coalitions did they form to combat them? The course also considers how human rights campaigners have engaged with - and been part of - wider political, religious and economic changes. It examines the negotiations and compromises that led to a key event in the twentieth-century human rights history: the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Has the subsequent success of the human rights movement - particularly the expansion of international human rights legislation - changed its character? The course examines the landmine ban campaign, the campaign against female genital cutting and the campaign against child soldiers - and considers the ideological challenges these issues present to the international human rights regime. When, if ever, are indigenous values more important than universal principles? What is the relation of human rights to religious values? Is human rights itself a quasi-religious belief system? Finally the course considers some contemporary challenges facing the human rights movement: the return of slavery and slave-like practices and the question of genocide in Darfur, in particular the role of the International Criminal Court. *Class size: 22*