

**PT 358 Critical Human Rights Advocacy/
Scholars at Risk**

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

8 ECTS-4 US credits. This seminar serves as an introduction to human rights advocacy, with a practical component. Half of the course (Mondays) focuses on the history and theory of human rights. 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 human rights advocacy from the campaign to abolish the slave trade to the founding of Amnesty International and 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) Network Collaborative Course (NCC) that connects seminars in the American University of Central Asia (taught by Prof. Saniya Toktogazieva), Al-Quds Bard College of Arts and Sciences (taught by Prof. Jana Lozanowska), and Bard College Annandale (taught by Prof. Ziad Abu-Rish). A number of activities including the creation of a research 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
- Jewher Ilham, *Because I Have To, The Path to Survival, The Uyghur Struggle*, ed. Adam Braver, University of New Orleans Press, 2022.
- The Advocates for Human Rights, *Human Rights Tools for a Changing World: A step-by-step guide to human rights fact-finding, documentation and advocacy*, January 2015
<<http://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/uploads/change.pdf>>

Additional required readings will be available through our Brightspace site (see below).

Platforms and technology

The NCC as a whole will use a shared Brightspace page with integrated Zoom, Panopto and Padlet for coursework. The Bard College Berlin section will have a dedicated portal within the NCC site that contains the Berlin section assignments and readings. It is important that you can connect to Brightspace and access all related sites regularly.

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 completing the research archive posts and posting responses to readings and lectures on the course Padlet site
- Write two short (3-5pp) 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/presentation; write a brief individual reflection paper on this work

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.

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, as well as group work ending with the creation of impromptu mini presentations. You may also be asked to select passages, formulate discussion questions or complete informal writing assignments in advance of the class. You will be asked to create posts for our network Padlet at least twice the semester, to help create a shared research archive for the class (please see instructions on the relevant Padlet site) as well as additional posts as needed. 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 20**. The second is due on **Friday December 1**. 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 an action or set of actions to support your imprisoned scholar, Ilham Tohti. 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, or curating a film or arts festival, to raise awareness about the scholar; doing relevant legal research; etc. All actions must be completed by **Sunday December 10**. In the last week of the semester, each group will hand in all written (and other) materials produced for the case and create a short final video or presentation that will be presented to the other campus sections in our closing joint session on **Wednesday December 20**. The materials and presentation together constitute your Final Action Portfolio. Please note that in addition to the final presentations for the other campuses, all sections will meet jointly at various times across the semester to discuss their advocacy campaigns.

Final Reflection Paper: The advocacy plans and actions will be matched with a reflection on them. You should write a short (2-3 page) analysis connecting your advocacy campaign to some of the scholarship on advocacy you have encountered in the course. How have the readings contributed to, shed light on, interfered with, complicated, or simplified the work you have done with SAR? This paper is due on the final day of the semester, **Friday December 22**

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>). 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 (Padlet etc): 20% (10% first half of course, 10% second half of course)

Paper #1: 20%

Paper #2: 20%

SAR advocacy group project and action portfolio: 30%

Final Reflection: 10%

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 September 4

Introduction

Reading:

- Keck and Sikkink, "Transnational Advocacy Networks in International and Regional Politics," UNESCO International Social Science Journal 59 (159), 1999, pp. 89-101 [Brightspace]

Wednesday September 6

What's happening in the Uyghur region?

Reading:

- Human Rights Watch and Mills Legal Clinic of Stanford Law School, "Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots": China's Crimes Against Humanity Targeting Uyghurs and Other Turkic Muslims, April 2021, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/04/china0421_web_2.pdf
- SAR pages about Scholars in Prison Project and our scholars here: <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/action/scholars-in-prison-project/>; <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/actions/ilham-tohti-china/>; <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/actions/rahile-dawut-china/>
- Uyghur Human Rights Project—What you can do": <https://uhrp.org/what-you-can-do>
- Kanji and Palumbo-Liu, "The Faux Anti-Imperialism of Denying Anti-Uighur Atrocities": <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/5/14/the-faux-anti-imperialism-of-denying-anti-uighur>

Week Two

Monday September 11

Human Rights Overview

Reading:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights [Brightspace]
- Advocates, Ch. 2 “Human Rights Background”
- Hahnimaki, “Rights and Responsibilities” [Brightspace]

Weds September 13 Scholars at Risk: Issues and Practices in an NGO

Guest speaker: Scholars at Risk staff member Alex Bell (via Zoom link) ** starts at 16:15 TBC

Readings:

- Quinn and Levine, “Intellectual-HRDs and Claims for Academic Freedom under Human Rights Law,” *International Journal of Human Rights* 18 (7-8), 2014, pp. 898-920 [GC]
- Watch <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/resources/introducing-scholars-risk/>
- Articles on Ilham Tohti
 - Ian Johnson, “The don’t want moderate Uighurs,” *New York Review of Books*, <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2014/09/22/trial-ilham-tohti-they-dont-want-moderate-uighurs/>
 - “Ilham Tohti: Uighur activist’s daughter fears for his life,” *BBC News*, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-50842514>
 - “Thousands of articles restored from downed website of Uyghur scholar Ilham Tohti” *Radio Free Asia*, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/website-10082020162512.html>

Week Three

Monday September 18

Roots of Human Rights Advocacy in the Movement to Abolish the Slave Trade I

Readings:

- Hochschild, *Bury the Chains*, read pp. 1-8 (Introduction), skim 9-84 (Chs 1-5), read 85-163 (Chs 6-11)

Wednesday September 20

Repression in the XUAR: Understanding the Context

Reading:

- Hunerven, “Spirit Breaking: Capitalism and Terror in Northwestern China” http://chuangcn.org/journal/two/spirit-breaking/?fbclid=IwAR366JS3gHvLUWkQ84gZsOk8sawKYzUGC6w2XCZu1MYRLDJ1_VytKCAEBSM
- One of the following articles (as assigned in class):
 - Hess, “We are not terrorists: Uighurs, Tibetans and the Global War on Terror” [Brightspace]
 - Hojer, “What does it take ‘to migrate’? Uyghur perspectives from Kyrgyzstan” [Brightspace]
 - Mabry, “Natives of the “New Frontier”: The Uyghurs of Xinjiang” [Brightspace]
 - Waller, “Crime and No Punishment? China’s Abuses Against the Uyghurs” [Brightspace]

Week Four

Monday September 25 —No class (make-up in completion week)

Weds Sept 27

AUCA Mini symposium (online): what are the ways forward for advocacy on behalf of Uyghur human rights? (Zoom link)—related readings and assignments TBA

Week Five

Monday October 2

Roots 2

Readings:

- Hochschild, *Bury the Chains*, pp. 165-296 (Chs 12-20)

Wednesday October 4

Guest speakers: Artist Lisa Ross and Uyghur Activist Akeda Pulati (via Zoom link) ** starts at 16:15

Readings:

- Crane, "Stolen By The State," Elle 2021 <https://www.elle.com/culture/a36421114/rahile-dawut-disappearance-china/>
- "Noted Uyghur Folklore Professor Serving Prison Term," Radio Free Asia <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/rahile-dawut-07132021175559.html>
- Akeda Pulati, et al., "China: Free Our Parents from Concentration Camps," New York Times, 19 Aug 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/19/opinion/uighurs-china-camps.html>
- "Tarim Talks to Lisa Ross" 11 March 2021 <https://www.thetarimnetwork.com/podcast/episode/4379365f/tarim-talks-to-lisa-ross-photographer-video-artist-educator>

Friday October 6

Informal Assignment: First Padlet Post should be uploaded to Research Archive by midnight

Week Six

Monday October 9

Roots 3

Readings:

- Hochschild, *Bury the Chains*, pp. 297-366 (Ch 21-23, Epilogue)

Wednesday October 11

Guest speakers: Activist Jewher Ilham and writer Adam Braver (via Zoom link)** starts at 16:15 *TBC*

Readings:

- Ilham and Braver (ed), *Because I have to*
- Mitchell, "Jewher Ilham is Dismantling the Politics of Fashion and Forced Labor" <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/dismantling-the-politics-of-fashion-and-forced-labor>
- "End Uyghur Forced Labor" <https://enduyghurforcedlabour.org/news/402-2/>
- „Daughters of Dissidents" video, <https://rwu.libguides.com/DaughtersofDissidents>

Week Seven

Monday October 16

"The Forgotten Prisoners," Amnesty International and the Politics of the Appeal

Readings:

- Benenson, "The Forgotten Prisoners," *The Observer* May 28, 1961 [Brightspace]
- Hopgood, *Keepers of the Flame* selection

Wednesday October 18 Advocacy work day

Friday October 20: Essay #1 due

FALL BREAK Monday October 23 and Wednesday October 25

Week Eight

Monday October 30

The Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo and the Crime of Enforced Disappearance

Readings:

- Keck and Sikkink, "Human Rights Advocacy Networks in Latin America," *Activists Beyond Borders* Cornell University Press, 1998, pp. 79-120 [Brightspace]
- Arditti, "The Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo and the Struggle Against Impunity" [Brightspace]
- International Convention on Enforced Disappearance: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-protection-all-persons-enforced>

Wednesday November 1 Guest speaker: Ben Mauk (via Zoom link) ** starts at 4:15 *TBC*

Readings:

- Mauk, "Weather Reports." The Believer Oct 2019 <<https://believermag.com/weather-reports-voices-from-xinjiang/>> [also in Brightspace]
- Mauk, "Inside Xinjiang's Prison State," New Yorker Feb. 2021 <<https://www.newyorker.com/news/a-reporter-at-large/china-xinjiang-prison-state-uighur-detention-camps-prisoner-testimony>>

Informal Assignment: Second Padlet Post due by midnight on Friday November 3

Week Nine

Monday November 6

Kony 2012 and The Ethics of Representing and Speaking for Others

Readings:

- Gready, "Responsibility to the Story," Journal of Human Rights Practice, 2:2, 2010, pp. 177-190 [Brightspace]
- Cole, "The White Savior Industrial Complex" The Atlantic 21 March 2012
<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843/>

Wednesday November 8 Advocacy work day

Week Ten

Monday November 13

Open Source and Forensic Investigation

Readings:

- Weizman, "Open Verification," *E-flux*, June 2019 [Brightspace]
- Weizman, "Forensis" Introduction [Brightspace]
- Forensic Architecture cases:
 - "Extra-Judicial Execution of Ahmad Erekat": <https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/the-extrajudicial-execution-of-ahmad-erekat>
 - "Racist Terror Attack in Hanau: The Arena Bar" <https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/hanau-the-arena-bar>

Wednesday November 15 Joint advocacy session presentations #1 (via Zoom link) ** starts at 16:15

Two class sections will share a 5-7 minute presentation (including up to 3 slides) of proposed action plan to present to the other class sections for feedback

Week Eleven

Monday November 20

Supply-chain activism

Readings:

- European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights, "International Law should promote business before profit," <https://www.ecchr.eu/en/case/international-law-should-promote-human-rights-before-profit/>
- ECCHR, "Garment supply chains in intensive care," https://www.ecchr.eu/fileadmin/Publikationen/ECCHR_PP_SUPPLYCHAINS_COVID_EN.pdf
- ECCHR UN Submission:
https://www.ecchr.eu/fileadmin/Juristische_Dokumente/ECCHR_Submission_UN_Treaty_February_2020.pdf
- ECCHR, Human Rights Violations Off the Rack, "European Brands Allegedly Rely on Forced Labor (Xinjiang)" <https://www.ecchr.eu/en/case/china-zwangsarbeit-uighuren/>

Wednesday November 22 Joint advocacy session presentations #2 (via Zoom link) ** starts at 16:15

Two class sections will share a 5-7 minute presentation (including up to 3 slides) of proposed action plan to present to the other class sections for feedback

Week Twelve

Monday November 27

Indifference, Denial, Blindness?

Readings:

- Cohen, "Government Responses to Human Rights Reports: Claims, Denials, Counterclaims," *Human Rights Quarterly* 18.3 (1996), pp. 517-543 [Brightspace]
- Cohen, "Ch 6: Bystander States" in *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering*, pp 141-167 [Brightspace]

Wednesday November 29 Advocacy Work Day

Friday December 1: Paper #2 due

Week Thirteen

Monday December 4

Personal Storytelling, then and now

Readings:

- Schaffer and Smith, "Conjunctions: Life Narratives in Human Rights," *Biography* 27.1 Winter 2004, pp 1-25 [Brightspace]
- Schaffer and Smith, "E-witnessing in the digital age" in *We Shall Bear Witness* ed Jolly and Jenson (2014), pp. 223-37 [Brightspace]

Wednesday December 6 Advocacy work day/actions

Sunday December 10: Actions Completed

Week Fourteen

Monday December 11

Mobilizing Shame (and Its Limits)

Readings:

- Keenan, "Mobilizing Shame," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 103 (2-3), 2004, pp. 435-449 [Brightspace]
- Pruce and Budabin, "Beyond Naming and Shaming: New Modalities of Information Politics in Human Rights," *Journal of Human Rights* 15(3), 2016, pp. 408-425 [Brightspace]

Wednesday December 13 (no class, make-up in completion week)

Scholars at Risk European Advocacy Days (13-15 December) *TBC*

Week Fifteen

Completion Week

Monday December 18

Course wrap-up discussion

Please read back through the syllabus carefully, and choose one reading or guest lecture that has been particularly meaningful to you and be ready to share and discuss it with the rest of the class (from readings be sure to include on actual passage from the text, from lectures a quotation or specific example/insight); please also be ready to share one thing you think was a success of the campaign work and one thing you would want to change to make the campaign stronger

Wednesday December 20 Joint advocacy session #2: Final Presentations

Prepare a short presentation (5 minutes per group/15 minutes per class) sharing the outcomes of each class project

Final Portfolios due

Friday December 22: Final Reflection Papers due