**POLS 390[[1]](#footnote-1) Humanitarian Intervention**



Photo credit: Jerry Fowler

Few concepts in international affairs have animated more discussion, indeed more controversy, than the ones entertained in this course. Consider this: On our own campus student groups and their representatives across the political spectrum have spent considerable time and money organizing events to raise awareness of – and to help bring an end to – the genocidal nightmare in the Darfur region of the Sudan. At the same time, however many of those students – and the faculty and staff attracted by their efforts – have often been quite critical of the Bush administration’s war in Iraq that was, in a very controversial way, justified by the humanitarian benefits of bringing an end to the brutal regime lead by Saddam Hussein. How can we reconcile these differences? Under what conditions (if ever) is it appropriate to use military force – *to ask soldiers to kill and die* – in order to “save the lives of strangers?” This question turns out to be massively complicated for it invites all manner of corollary questions such as:

What is the responsibility of the international community to victims of human rights abuses, including genocide?

What uses of force are lawful? If not lawful, can they be still ethical?

Don’t states in the international system have the right to be free from foreign intervention in what are essentially domestic affairs of state?

What does it mean for citizens in the West to call for an end to conflicts in Africa and elsewhere, when roots of those conflicts often lie in the West?

If there is a so-called “responsibility to protect” innocent victims of atrocities, on to whom, exactly, does this responsibility fall?

These and other questions related to the ethics, law and politics of what has become known as humanitarian intervention, broadly defined, constitute the framework for this course.

My objectives do not include convincing you that a particular course of action in any given humanitarian crisis is appropriate, though you will almost certainly hear my views on a great number of crises, past and present. What I do hope to accomplish, however, is to get you to think about these matters more critically and in a multidimensional way. That is, I hope you will come to tolerate a certain unavoidable level of ambiguity as we grapple with both the problems and prospects of “doing good.”

*Note to Conflict Studies Majors (and those considering the CFST major or minor*).

Conflict lies at the very heart of this course. We examine conflicts of several kinds, however. Perhaps the most obvious are the grave civil conflicts – a truly ironic label – which often account for the complex humanitarian emergencies that trigger the call for humanitarian intervention. These wars often have, at least superficially, ethnic or ethno-nationalist overtones, but as we will see, that’s rarely an adequate explanation. We will want to explore the root or structural bases for these conflicts as well as their more manifest forms. We’re interested as well in prevention and rebuilding from these often devastating affairs. In addition conditions on the ground we investigate conflicts as they are imbedded in international law. These include conflicts between sovereignty and human rights, or the rights of people versus the rights of states. These structural parameters of the international system play out in various ways directly related to the capacity of actors in the international community to respond meaningfully to genocide and crimes against humanity.

**BOOKS FOR PURCHASE**

Bellamy, Alex. 2009. *The Responsibility to Protect*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gourevitch, Philip. 1999. *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will be Killed With Our Families. Stories from Rwanda.* New York. Picador.

Weiss, Thomas G. 2011. *Humanitarian Intervention.* Cambridge. Polity Press.

Wheeler, Nicholas J. 2000. *Saving Strangers. Humanitarian Intervention in International Society*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

Whitworth, Sandra. 2004. *Men, Militarism and UN Peacekeeping: A Gendered Analysis*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Press.

**SCHEDULE OF TOPICS**

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| **Date** | **Topic** | **Reading** | **Notes** |
| 1/29 | Genocide | *The Devil Came on Horseback* | Film |
| 1/31 | The Ethics of Assistance and the moral relevance of distance | Singer, Peter. 2004. “Outsiders: our obligation to those beyond our borders”  Arthur, John. “Famine Relief and the Ideal Moral Code”  Kelly, Erin. 2004. “Human Rights as Foreign Policy Imperatives” |  |
| 2/5 | Textbook Case. Rwanda | Gourevitch. *We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow we will be Killed with our Families* |  |
| 2/7 | Textbook Case. Rwanda (continued) | Gourevitch. *We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow we will be Killed with our Families* |  |
| 2/12 | Introduction to concepts, issues and debates | Weiss. “Preface” and “Conceptual Building Blocks”  Bellamy, chapter 1  Bello. “Humanitarian Intervention. Evolution of a Dangerous Doctrine” | Too much break into two days? |
| 2/14 | Intervention and International Law | Wheeler. “Introduction”  Rogers. “Humanitarian Intervention and International Law”  Malone. Introduction: Seeking Reconciliation of Self Determination, Territorial Integrity, and Humanitarian Intervention” | See relevant legal [(UN)](http://www.hrweb.org/legal/undocs.html) documents on Moodle |
| 2/19 | Old and New Interventionisms | Weiss. chapters 2,3 |  |
| 2/21 | Test 1 |  |  |
| 2/26 | Intervention and International Relations | Wheeler. “Humanitarian Intervention and International Society”  Wheeler. Chapter 2  Chandler |  |
| 2/28 | Intervention during the Cold War | Wheeler. Chapters 3,4 |  |
| 3/5 | A Question of Ethics.Revisited | Orford. “Watching East Timor”  Nardin. “The Moral Basis of Humanitarian Intervention”  Bittner. “Humanitarian Interventions are Wrong” |  |
| 3/7 | Blackhawk Down | Wheeler. chapter 6 |  |
| 3/12 | Rwanda Revisited | Wheeler. chapter 7  Wheeler. Chapter 7  Barnett. “Bureaucratizing the Duty to Aid” |  |
| 3/14 | Rwanda Revisited | Kuperman. “Rwanda in Retrospect”  Rieff. “An Age of Genocide.” |  |
| 3/19 | UN Security Council and the Veil of Ignorance | Simulation | Syria Synopsis due (1-2 pages) |
| 3/21 | R2P. A New Norm? | Weiss. chapter 4  Bellamy chapter 2, 3 |  |
| 4/2 | R2P Continued | Bellamy, chapter 5  Chandler, David. “Understanding the Gap…” |  |
| 4/4 | Test 2 |  |  |
| 4/9 | Iraq: an empirical and theoretical quagmire | Roth. “War in Iraq. Not a Humanitarian Intervention”  Teson. “Ending Tyranny in Iraq” |  |
| 4/11 | Iraq (continued) | Nardin. “Humanitarian Imperialism”  Tesón. “Of Tyrants and Empires” |  |
| 4/16 | Darfur | Power. “Dying in Darfur”  Mamdani. “The Politics of Naming: Genocide, Civil War, Insurgency”  Rice. “Why Darfur Can’t be Left to Africa” |  |
| 4/18 | A Gendered Critique | Whitworth, “Preface”, “Introduction” and chapter 2 |  |
| 4/23 |  | Whitworth, chapters 3,4,5 |  |
| 4/25 | Responsibility to Prevent? | Bellamy 4  Williams and Bellamy, “The New Politics of Protection…” |  |
| 4/30 | From “Early” Warning to Response | Bellamy, “Early Warning”  UN Sec-Gen Report, “Early warning, assessment, and the Responsibility to Protect”  O’Bannon. “ ‘Monitoring the Frog’ in Africa: Conflict Early Warning with Structural Data | Final paper due |
| 5/2 | Responsibility to Rebuild? | Bellamy, chapter 6  IPA, “Security – Development Nexus…” (pp: 1-11)  Ayoob. “Third World Perspective on Humanitarian Intervention and International Administration” |  |
| 5/7 | UN Security Council and the case of Syria | Simulation | Simulation character sketch due |
| 5/9 | And so? | Weiss. Chapter 5  Bellamy Conclusion |  |

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Class Participation. (15%)

This is required. You are expected to show up to class prepared to engage with the material assigned. That means I expect to hear from you in class and in ways that reflect your understanding of the reading.

A note on attendance. Though I have no formal attendance policy in this class, that is I don’t actually take attendance, participation in this class is essential. For one, it counts for 10% of your grade. It goes without saying (well apparently it doesn’t!) that you can’t participate if you don’t attend. If you miss 2-3 classes you will likely have jeopardized your participation grade. If you miss *more* than 2-3 classes, you’re overall grade is likely in danger.

Tests (25%, 25%)

There are two tests in this class. They are worth 25% each. These tests will be a combination of short answer and short essay. If time requires we might make one or more of these tests of the “take home” variety.

Simulation (15%)

You will participate in a two-part simulation. On March 21, you will simulate a UN Security Council session in which the question of a military intervention in Syria will be discussed. You will seek to obtain a majority position for a course of action deemed appropriate and effective in bringing about an end to the human protection crisis in that country. For this first simulation, you will sit behind the so-called veil of ignorance. That is, you will not know the identity of your character (e.g., state member of the security council or NGO with “consultative status”). You will, however, have been studying the problem in Syria. To facilitate discussion, you will submit on the day of the first simulation a 1-2 page synopsis of this human protection crisis.

Upon completion of the first part of the simulation, you will be ‘unveiled’ and learn the character you will play in the final part of the simulation, which will be held on the final day of class. You will have until the second simulation to study your character. You are to learn what the state’s or NGO’s position/record is on: human rights, intervention in general, R2P, conditions for intervention, etc. To facilitate this research, you will submit on the day of the second simulation a 1-2 page character sketch.

Research Paper (20%).

For your final research paper, you will be required to choose a current complex humanitarian disaster – chosen in consultation with me – and answer the following question: What are the implications of the emerging norm of the Responsibility to Protect for the CHE you have chosen? Does the international community, given the central pillars (and the toolboxes) of the R2P norm, have a responsibility for the CHE in question.? If so, what, exactly, seems to be required in order to satisfy the conditions of R2P. The paper should be 10-15 pages in length.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

From the Student Handbook.

"Academic integrity refers to the ethical standards and policies that govern how people work and interact in the academic enterprise at a college or university. These standards and policies attempt to do more than define and condemn what is wrong or unethical; they also attempt to provide a foundation for the mutual trust and individual responsibility necessary in a healthy academic community..

Academic integrity is not solely the responsibility of students. Rather, faculty members and administrators have the responsibility of creating an environment in which honesty is encouraged, dishonesty discouraged and integrity is openly discussed."

From Charles Lipson, *Doing Honest Work in College*.

Academic honesty boils down to three simple but powerful principles.

    When you say you did the work yourself, you actually did it.

     When you rely on someone else's work, you cite it. When you use their words, you quote them accurately, and you cite them, too.

     When you present research materials, you present them fairly and truthfully. That's true whether the research involves data, documents, or the writings of other scholars.

Consistent with these remarks, please understand that I view academic integrity as the moral foundation of the university experience. In recent years the presumption of integrity has suffered some very serious blows. A professor at Mount Holyoke College admitted he falsified information in his lectures regarding service in the US Armed Forces during the Vietnam War. He was subsequently suspended from the college. More recently, noted historian Stephen Ambrose admitted to using without proper attribution sentences and phrases from others' work in his book *The Wild Blue*. It would seem we have a problem of national scope.

We cannot be responsible for what others may do, but we can see to it that our own efforts are of the highest caliber. To pursue such a course, we must be familiar with the University's policy regarding Academic Integrity. In this, as in all my courses, I apply the University's policy fully. In short, no violation of the integrity policy will be excused.

1. Cross-listed with Black Studies and Conflict Studies programs [↑](#footnote-ref-1)