Human Rights in the Americas Summer 1, 2023

Human Rights in the Americas

(LABS 4301 CRN 33351 / ANTH 4370 CRN 33625 / SOCI 3341 CRN 33626)

Summer 2023

June 12th to July 7th, 2022

Final Exam is July 8th, 9th, 10th

Online, asynchronous, through Blackboard

The University of Texas at El Paso

College of Liberal Arts,

Department of Sociology and Anthropology,

Center for Inter-American and Border Studies

Instructor: Dr. Patrick Timmons, M.Phil., Ph.D., LL.M.

Office Hours: Virtually, by appointment. Please email me to set up a time you would like to meet.

Office: None

E-mail: ptimmons2@utep.edu[1]

Class Website: Blackboard through MyUTEP portal

Course Overview

This course is a general introduction to the study of human rights in the Americas since the mid-1970s, although it does introduce students to the foundation of the modern human rights discourse and organizing through the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The primary goals of this course are:

1.   To introduce students to human rights as a legal discourse used by international human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations to promote, protect and defend individuals and groups from human rights abuses **by state actors**; and,

2.   To examine how that legal framework enables human rights victims, their defenders and journalists to document and confront **state** or **state-supported** perpetrators of abuse.

This course will help familiarize you with international human rights law, human rights journalism, human rights advocacy, human rights groups, and human rights mechanisms.

We will cover various forms of human rights abuses (and their corresponding clusters of rights):

- Disappearances (right to life, right to judicial protection, right to a family)

- Torture (right to humane treatment, right to dignity, right to integrity of the person)

- Violence against journalists (right to freedom of expression, right to life)

- Violence against women (right to equality under the law, right to life, right to non-discrimination)

- Separating migrant children from their parents (right to a family, right to mobility)

- Medical patients, including but not limited to users of illicit drugs (right to health, right to dignity, right to personal integrity)

- LGBTTI (right to an identity, right to non-discrimination, right to a family)

- Indigenous groups (right to equality under the law, right to non-discrimination)

A key focus of the class is human rights storytelling: how to document instances of abuse and the confrontation of that abuse in order to tell stories which make human rights victims visible and which reach a broader public.

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[1] mailto:cigdemsirin@utep.edu

Regional Focus

This course adopts an Americas region geographic focus to human rights cases and controversies.

There are several countries of significance to the course's case and controversy approach, and in each week's unit we will have cases from two or more of these countries to consider:

- The United States

- Mexico

- Central American countries, especially the northern triangle countries of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras

Learning Outcomes

With adequate effort and a can-do disposition, you will do well in this course. By the end of this course, you will achieve the following learning outcomes:

§ To define, understand, and apply the concepts, principles, and practices of human rights law. (Targeted Edge advantage: Global Awareness, Social Responsibility)

§ To engage in the systematic, scholarly study of human rights abuses, bringing together discussions over perpetrators' responsibility and reparations for victims. (Targeted Edge advantage: Social Responsibility, Problem Solving).

§ To recognize the analytical methods and approaches that scholars, lawyers, activists and state agents can use to understand human rights abuse and protection. (Targeted Edge advantage: Critical Thinking).

§ To apply and critique a body of factual knowledge and theories relevant to understanding human rights abuses in the Americas. (Targeted Edge advantage: Global Awareness).

§ To comprehend and evaluate through writing the effects of and the relationships among historical, social, political, economic, cultural, and global forces in the Americas since 1948. (Targeted Edge advantage: Communication, Critical Thinking, Global Awareness).

§ To interpret and analyze human rights abuses using international treaties. (Targeted Edge Advantage: Global Awareness.)

§ To become familiar with the ways journalists and advocates write about human rights abuses in the Americas. (Targeted Edge Advantage: Communication, Confidence, Critical Thinking).

§ To gain a greater understanding about the ways in which people search for justice. (Targeted Edge Advantage: Problem Solving, Social Responsibility.)

Learning Modules

This course is designed using a modular format—that is, each week is "packaged" as a single module so that all the materials, lecture notes, submission areas, discussion posts are in one area for a given week.

At the end of this syllabus you can see the four different modules for this class.

Grading Policy

Your final grade in this class will be based on the following requirements:

All grades (including the final grade) are based on the following distribution of 1,000 points:

Mid-Term Exam for 200 points, activated on Monday June 26th and due Saturday July 1st

Final Exam for 300 points, activated on Friday, July 7th and due Monday, July 10th

Book Review of Mark Danner, *Massacre at El Mozote*, for 150 points

Weekly discussion posts, totaling 150 points, due every Sunday at 11pm MT

Weekly open tests, totaling 200 points, due every Sunday at 11pm MT

Whatever total you score of the 1,000 points available is divided by 10 to create a percentage.

Points	Letter
≥ 89.50	A
79.50-89.49	B
69.50-79.49	C
59.50-69.49	D
≤ 59.49	F

I do not offer individual-specific extra-credit opportunities. If you are concerned about your grade, please schedule an office hours appointment with me to talk about strategies for improvement.

This is particularly important if your grade on the midterm is not what you expected.

I can give you feedback and suggestions on how to improve your performance in the class.

I urge you to use the Writing Center as much as you can for each written assignment. I expect the Writing Center to be used for major assignments, such as the book review.

Suggestions for success

Keep in mind that this online course is labor-intensive, particularly since the course covers 16 weeks of course material in a relatively short 4-week period.

Although completing a course online might seem easier than attending face-to-face classes, it takes a large amount of additional effort and time to:
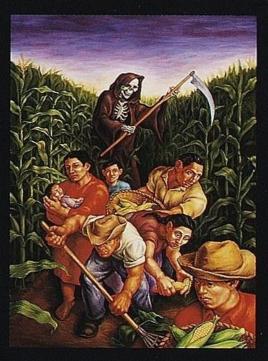
(a) read and comprehend all the material, and

(b) type out and turn in the online class discussion posts, assignments, and other online class activities.

While regular classes may require about 7-9 hours of weekly work, our online class will require you to invest closer to around 16-18 hours of dedicated time each week.

The 4-week course will be completed in a relatively short time and will earn you the same three credit hours towards graduation.

Required Course Text

The Massacre at El Mozote

"Once in a rare while a writer reexamines a debated episode of recent history with such thoroughness and integrity that the truth can no longer be in doubt. Mark Danner [has done] just that."
—Anthony Lewis, *The New York Times*

Mark Danner

- Mark Danner, Massacre at El Mozote: A Parable of the Cold War.

- **ISBN-10:** 067975525X

- **ISBN-13:** 978-0679755258

This book is available at the UTEP Bookstore and at online booksellers.

If you choose to order your book via an online provider, please be mindful of the delivery time.

It is also available via the UTEP Library's digital reserves. The link for the PDF of the book on digital reserve is shared on our Blackboard page. **NB: We are only making the book available to you in digital copy while you obtain a physical copy.**

Required Readings

There is no textbook for this class.

This is a cutting-edge class based around up-to-date cases and controversies in human rights.

Much of the source material comes from journalists and non-governmental organizations representing victims of abuse, but it is also balanced by perspectives from documents produced by governments and international treaty bodies, such as the Inter-American Commission and Court of Human Rights based in Washington, DC and San José, Costa Rica, respectively.

It is the combination of different materials, and the way you will interpret and judge them, that make this is a scholarly class.

The Rhythm and Substance of the Class

Each week you will have assigned readings and viewings on Blackboard.

There are three subjects each week -- each subject leads into a whole universe associated with human rights abuse:

- journalism and NGOs documenting the pain of the victims,

- the complaint against the state for the abuse and failure to prevent it, the state's response,

- civil society campaigns to bring attention to the abuse, and demand reparations

- a legal battle in national and international jurisdictions

- political infighting over how to stop abuse, or to deny abuse took place

There's no expectation for you to master each of these areas but there is an expectation of some familiarity with most of the sources on the Blackboard website.

Vast amounts of material are collected each year to report on human rights, and the field of human rights as an academic discipline, especially outside the United States, is deep, with many currents.

You must follow where your interest takes you; there is a lot of work to do to explore whatever your passion is in human rights.

It is important that you begin each week by first carefully going over all the materials in Blackboard. Take notes.

The class schedule, with the subjects for each week, but not the readings, appears on the last page of the syllabus.

The class only works if you want to study the material. It's a significant challenge in a fully online class. If you need to talk things through with the instructor, schedule a virtual appointment, please.

Weekly open test

After you do the assigned readings for a given week, you will take the weekly open test.

There are specific instructions on how to complete the open test on Blackboard.

The test is "open" because the question you respond to each week is open, and always the same question.

In two paragraphs, please respond to the question: what have you learned from the different sources this week?

Unlike the discussion board, only the professor reads the weekly open test responses.

In addition to the two paragraphs, you are required to ask one question as part of the weekly test.

This might be a question where you require clarification about something you have read or seen.

Or maybe you need a reference to an element of human rights law.

Or maybe something in the material confuses you and you think the professor could help with an answer.

The question you ask is up to you: but you must ask a question.

Submit your two paragraphs for the open test and your question by Sunday, 11:00pm (MT) each week.

The weekly open tests are useful for preparing for the exams and also give you a record of your learning process.

Exams

There are two exams for the course.

The Midterm is worth 20 percent of the final grade.

The Final Exam is worth 30 percent of the final grade.

Questions are based on the readings, lectures, and online discussions.

The exams will be "open book" so that you will be able to have all support materials you think are necessary to answer the exam questions.

The exams will be administered via Blackboard.

You will have **weekdays (Monday or Tuesday through Friday or Saturday) in two specific weeks** to complete the exams upon activation.

The exams are to be taken individually—it is not allowed to discuss the exam questions with the classmates or anyone else.

Please refer to the section on "Academic Integrity" below to review the university and instructor policies on cheating, collusion, and plagiarism.

Make-up exams

Make-up exams will be given *only* in the case of a *documented* emergency (see "excused absences and excuse for late work" below).

If you miss a test and your absence is not considered excused, you will receive a zero on the test. This policy will be strictly enforced.

Essay about Mark Danner's, *Massacre at El Mozote: A **Parable** of the Cold War*

One of the key purposes of this course is to introduce you to effective ways of studying and writing about human rights violations.

An important part of this goal is to help you develop the analytical and writing skills necessary to grasp the dynamics of systematically studying human rights violations and the response to those violations.

Given this objective, you will write a three-page review essay of Danner's book, which will constitute 15 percent of your final grade.

The instructions for this three page book review essay task are provided on the course website.

Discussion posts and class participation

This is the central activity of the class and you will need to log into Blackboard several times during the week to participate effectively in the discussion board for each week.

Each week you will submit:

(1) a discussion post in response to a guided question (minimum of **250 words** and maximum of **500 words**); and,

(2) respond to **at least one** of your classmates' post (minimum of **100 words** and maximum of **500 words**).

Be sure to submit your discussion post and response to your peers for a given week by Sunday, 11:00pm (MT) of that week to receive credit for your participation.

Class participation via discussion posts makes up a significant portion of your grade in this class.

Check Blackboard for instructions about the three-paragraph format. **The instructor will not read your discussion post** if you do not use a three-paragraph format and the post will be returned to you with **a grade of zero** and **an instruction to resubmit your post**.

The intention of the grade of zero is for you to submit your amended post for re-grading.

It is a requirement that you comment on other students' submissions on the discussion board. **The instructor will not read your discussion post** if you do not include at least one comment on another student's post, **you will receive a grade of zero**, and an **instruction to resubmit with a comment on another student's post**.

The instructor will not read your discussion post if you do not use a three-paragraph format and the post will be returned to you with a grade of zero and an instruction to resubmit your post.

Some suggestions for successful posts:

Write with the **curiosity** of university students.

The instructor is more interested in doubts and the questions you raise rather than providing concrete answers. The expression of doubt and uncertainty is a skill and something to be practiced and developed.

You are strongly encouraged to use the UTEP Writing cCenter for assistance in drafting all written work, including discussion boards, essay, and reviews.

I expect everyone to actively participate in class and do so in a positive and appropriate way (see the "Online Etiquette and Effective Communication" section below). Keep in mind that class participation is more than just completing the scheduled assignments and taking exams—you should be willing to ask and answer questions and contribute intellectually to class debates via online discussion posts.

Before posting a discussion, you should complete the assigned readings and go over the lecture notes. Exams will cover material from the readings, lectures, and our online discussions, so doing just one or the other will leave you at a disadvantage. Full credit for a discussion post is reserved only for those that follow the online etiquette and effective communication rules below.

Course/Instructor Policies
The first thing to note is that if you miss any work for this class you will not receive a passing grade.

All work is required for a grade. Miss any piece of work and you will receive an "F". You are not allowed to pick and choose your assignments.

E-Mail Protocol

UTEP e-mail is the best way to contact the instructor: **ptimmons2@utep.edu**[2]. Please do not try to contact the instructor via the Blackboard messaging function.

Please **only** email the instructor from your UTEP email account. The instructor cannot respond to emails from non-UTEP accounts.

When e-mailing me **from your UTEP account**, **please put the course number in the subject line**. In the body of your e-mail, clearly state your question. At the end of your e-mail, be sure to put your first and last name, and your university identification number.

I will make every attempt to respond to your e-mail within 24-48 hours of receipt during weekdays. I will respond to weekend messages by Monday at the latest.

Online Etiquette and Effective Communication

It is essential that the **utmost respect and professionalism** be adhered in all exchanges between class members.

We will be discussing sensitive and controversial topics.

Avoid any unnecessary arguments with other class members, such as political polemical arguments (e.g., negative partisan talking points targeting those of opposing ideological perspectives or particular political figures) or, even worse, personal attacks on others for having different views.

No inappropriate behavior will be tolerated.

Unprofessional conduct will be dealt with swiftly through the University.

It is at the professor's full discretion to have a student dropped from the course for any inappropriate behavior.

Online Etiquette and Effective Communication Policy

Please carefully read the following rules for online etiquette and effective communication:

Language: Given the absence of face-to-face clues, written text can easily be misinterpreted. Avoid the use of strong or offensive language, all capital letters, and the excessive use of exclamation points. If you feel particularly strongly about a point, it may be best to write it first as a draft and then to review it, before posting it, in order to remove any strong language.

Respect: A web-based classroom is still a classroom, and comments that would be inappropriate in a regular classroom are likely to be inappropriate in a Web-based course as well. Treat your professor and your fellow students with respect. Remember that members of the class and the instructor will be reading any postings.

Be Forgiving: If someone states something that you find offensive, mention this directly to the professor in an email. Remember that the person contributing to the discussion is also new to this form

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[2] mailto:ptimmons2@utep.edu

of communication. What you find offensive may quite possibly have been unintended and can best be cleared up by the professor.

Treat your professor and your fellow students with respect.

This is Permanent: Think carefully about the content of your message before contributing it. Once sent, there is no taking it back. When reacting to someone else's message, address the ideas, not the person. Post only what anyone would comfortably state in a face-to-face situation.

Edit Your Work: The grammar, spelling, and punctuation of a message are part of the grading criteria – you should not expect your professor and peers to decode misspelled words or poorly constructed sentences. It is a good practice to compose and check your comments in a word-processor before posting them.

Test for Clarity: Messages may often appear perfectly clear to you as you compose them, but turn out to be perfectly obtuse to your reader. One way to test for clarity is to read your message aloud to see if it flows smoothly and if you can read it to another person before posting it, even better.

Follow the Parameters/Stick to the Point: Follow the posting requirements and parameters set up by your professor. Contributions to a discussion should have a clear subject header, and you need to stick to the subject. Don't waste others' time by going off on irrelevant tangents. Also keep in mind that no credit will be received for yes/no answers. Posts should justify positions and provide specific examples. Students must demonstrate that they have read the assignment and their classmates' comments carefully and thoughtfully.

Read First, Write Later: Don't add your comments to a discussion before reading the comments of other students unless the assignment specifically asks you to.

Doing so is tantamount to ignoring your fellow students and is rude.

Comments related to the content of previous messages should be posted under them to keep related topics organized, and you should specify the person and the particular point you are following up on.

Excused Absences and Excuse for Late Work

I will excuse absences and late work *only* when a student participates in an official university-recognized activity, observes a recognized religious holiday of her/his faith that happens to coincide with a class session or due date for an assignment, is called to and participates in active military service for a reasonably brief period, or confronts a medical emergency.

To be excused, you must notify me *in writing* **prior** to the date of absence.

That said, in cases where advance notification is not feasible (e.g. a medical emergency), you must provide notification **as soon as possible** following your absence. Such notification must include an explanation of why notice could not be sent in advance. You must also provide satisfactory documentation verifying the reason for the absence. In case of an illness, a doctor's note is the proper documentation required.

*For my records, you should e-mail me **a scanned copy** of the documentation that verifies the reason for your absence (if you don't have access to a scanner, you can take a photo of the documentation). Documentation that is not provided in a timely manner will not be accepted.*

You must also provide satisfactory documentation verifying the reason for the absence.

Please do not ask the instructor to excuse absences for minor illnesses or scheduling conflicts (e.g. sports practices, play rehearsals, meetings, conferences, appointments with other professors or advisors, student teaching, having your cable installed, having a bad headache, etc.). The instructor is aware that students have other interests and obligations, but you should nevertheless make this class a priority. If you are likely to have recurring conflicts, please take another course that better fits your schedule.

See academic regulations in UTEP Undergraduate Catalogue for a list of excused absences:

http://catalog.utep.edu/undergrad/academic-regulations/curriculum-and-classroom-policies/.

According to UTEP Curriculum and Classroom Policies:

"When, in the judgment of the instructor, a student has been absent to such a degree as to impair his or her status relative to credit for the course, the instructor may drop the student from the class with a grade of "W" before the course drop deadline and with a grade of "F" after the course drop deadline."

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures.

It includes, but is not limited to cheating, collusion, and plagiarism.

Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student and possessing unauthorized materials during a test.

Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. One example of collusion is preparing a discussion entry for another person or having someone prepare a discussion entry for you. The insturctor encourages students to study together and work collectively; however, working together to write any part of a written assignment, research paper, and/or exam is collusion.

Plagiarism is commonly defined as passing off the ideas, works, writing, etc., of another person as your own. Accordingly, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own work, even if you have the permission of that person. Be aware, just as the internet has made it easier to find material, it has also made it easier to trace the source of any written work. If you are unsure whether a citation is required, err on the side of caution and provide one.

Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Violations will be taken seriously and will be referred to the Dean of Students Office for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions. Refer to the

Office for Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution at **https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/osccr/index.html.**

Copyright Statement for Course Materials

All materials used in this course are protected by copyright law.

The course materials are only for the use of students currently enrolled in this course and only for the purpose of this course. They may not be further disseminated.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities.

Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities.

If you require specific accommodations and support services, please contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS).

Please keep in mind that accommodations need to be requested at least two weeks (or a month if advance planning, such as the acquisition of books-on-tape, is required) prior to the beginning of the semester.

Here is the contact information for CASS:

Web: http://sa.utep.edu/cass/;

Phone: (915) 747-5148; fax: (915) 747-8712;

E-mail: **cass@utep.edu;**[3] location: UTEP Union Building East Room 106.

Software Requirements

You will need the following software on your computer to efficiently work in this course (your computer may already have some of these programs installed:

 Adobe Acrobat Reader. To get this program, go to **https://acrobat.adobe.com/us/en/products/pdf-reader.html and follow the instructions.**[4]

  QuickTime Player. To get this program, go to http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/ and follow the instructions.

 Microsoft Office. If you do not have a word-processing software, go to **https://my.apps.utep.edu. Using My.Apps interface, UTEP students can access most**[5] software offered in student computer labs (including Microsoft Office) from their personal computing devices. Students can use any laptop, tablet,

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[3]mailto:cass@utep.edu
[4]https://acrobat.adobe.com/us/en/products/pdf-reader.html
[5]https://my.apps.utep.edu/

or smartphone with an Internet connection and use the software from anywhere at any time. For more information, go to **http://admin.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=73740 and follow the instructions.**[6]

UTEP Technical Support

The University of Texas at El Paso offers complete technical information and Help Desk support at: http://issweb.utep.edu/techsupport/**.**

Alternative Means of Submitting Work in Case of Technical Issues

The instructor strongly suggests that you save all your work (answers to discussion points, quizzes, exams, and essays) in a separate Word document as a back-up in case there is a technical issue with the course website, network, and/or your computer.

This way, you will have evidence that you completed the work and will not lose credit.

If you are experiencing difficulties submitting your work through the course website, you can always email the instructor (**ptimmons2@utep.edu) your back-up**[7] document.

However, this is just to prove you completed the assignment. The instructor will ask you to resolve your technology issues and submit the assignment via Blackboard once they are resolved.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND TASKS

WEEKS/MODULES AT A GLANCE*

* Please be aware that the specific readings or viewings or audio will always be released to you on Blackboard by noon (12pm) MT each Monday.

Week 1: 06/12 to 06/18: Introduction; Treaties; Perpetrators and Victims

· Carefully read the syllabus

· Review the posted materials in the "Welcome and Course Introduction" folder

· Do this week's required readings, **the most important of which** is Elizabeth Drew's *New Yorker* article of 1977, "A Reporter at Large: Human Rights."

· Submit your Weekly Discussion Post original contribution and comment on another student's original contribution.

· Write and submit the two paragraphs for the Weekly Open Test.

Week 2: 06/19 to 06/25: Fundamental Rights: Life, Dignity, Expression

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[6]http://admin.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=73740
[7]mailto:ptimmons2@utep.edu

- Do this week's readings.

- Review the items in the materials folder

- Submit your discussion post

- Write and submit the two paragraphs for the Weekly Open Test.

Midterm Exam – will be activated on Tuesday, June 20 @ 11:00am and due on Saturday, June 24 @ 11:00pm (MT).

Week 3: 06/26 to 07/03: Vulnerable humans: Women, children, medical patients

- Do this week's readings

- Review the items in the materials folder

- Submit your discussion post

- Write and submit the two paragraphs for the Weekly Open Test.

Book Review – due on Friday, June 30 @ 11:00pm (MT).

Week 4: 07/04 to 07/07: Anti-discrimination (LGBTTI and Indigenous People); Conclusion

- Do this week's readings.

- Review the items in the materials folder

- Submit your discussion post

- Write and submit the two paragraphs for the Weekly Open Test.

Final Exam – will be activated on Friday, July 7 @ 11:00am and due on Monday, July 10 @ 11:00pm (MT).

*The designated time zone for the submission of all course assignments and tasks is Mountain Time (MT). Juárez/El Paso/Las Cruces are on Mountain Time.

Please remember to evaluate the class about two weeks before the semester's end. UTEP and the professor value your assessment!