“Never Again!” and the Problem of Prevention
Human Rights in a Global Perspective

DGA 26:478:599 / Tues 6-8:40
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Since the passage of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), human rights have become increasingly central to our global world. While there are many threads that led to this contemporary prominence of human rights, including the fight against enslavement and wartime atrocities, it is directly bound up with extreme Nazi violence during World War II. At this time, the international community recognized that human rights violations were among the most important “problems without passports” that needed to be addressed.

In response, global actors promised “never again!” and began to forge a new global human rights regime to prevent such violence from recurring. This regime included: (a) key values (human dignity and equality) and norms codified in the UDHR and international human rights law; (b) institutional actors focused on human rights (like the UN Commission on Human Rights / Human Rights Council); and (c) mechanisms for protecting human rights (such as Universal Periodic Review).

The United Nations, established in 1945, was instrumental in the creation of this global human rights regime -- or constellation of norms, institutions, mechanisms, and practices operating on the global, transnational, regional, and national levels -- even as it was beset by challenges such as the problem of enforcement, sovereignty/non-intervention, and exclusions. The 1994 Rwandan genocide underscored the point that more needed to be done to fulfill the “never again!” promise and address the problem of prevention.

Kofi Annan, who became UN Secretary General in 1997, foregrounded human rights and prevention at the UN and sought to mobilize the international community to act. In part due to his actions, a global atrocity crimes regime, linked to specific “upstream,” “midstream,” and “downstream” prevention strategies, began to emerge, a development underscored by 2005 passage of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and humanitarian intervention norms.

While the history and development of this new modality of human rights global governance and atrocity crimes prevention is a key focus of this course, we will explore how human rights ideas, laws, institutions, movements, and practices are enacted, transformed, contested, translated, and understood in contexts ranging from the human rights backrooms of the United Nations to the international criminal tribunal in Cambodia. These dynamics shed light on how human rights are related to structure, power, and history.

Course Requirements
• Weekly Assignments (e.g., key passage analysis, in-class writing, presentation) (50%)
• Late Mid-Term Exam (30%)
• 8-10 page essay (20%)
DRAFT CLASS SCHEDULE OVERVIEW

Tu, Sept 6 – Introduction: “Never Again!” and the Problem of Prevention

Tu, Sept 12 – The Problem of Human Dignity: The First Wave -- UDHR & Nuremberg
  • Glendon, A World Made New, selection + D&W, International Human Rights, Ch 1

Tu, Sept 19 – The Second Wave: The Intl HR Regime
  • D&W + International Human Rights System, selections

Tu, Sept 26 – Critiques and Challenges: Power, Race, Gender, Culture, History
  • Dembour, “Critiques” / Mutua / AAA Statement / DuBois “Appeal,” excerpt

Tu, Oct 3 – Problem of Group Destruction – First Wave II, Raphael Lemkin and the UNGC
  • Lemkin essay / Waller, Confronting Evil chapter / D&W, International Human Rights, Ch 10

Tu, Oct 10 – Human Rights and Literature
  • Poetry / lit reading, tba / Start Annan Interventions

Tu, Oct 17 – Never Again! Redux – New Atrocity Crimes Challenges
  • Annan Interventions (though 158) + OSAPG “Framework of Analysis”

Tu, Oct 24 – The Third Wave: Upstream / Midstream / Downstream Prevention
  • Waller, Confronting Evil, chap / Bridget-Conley / USHMM “Country Case Studies”

Tu, Oct 31 – Prevention: Case Study
  • prevention case studies (USHMM “Country Case Studies”)

Tu, Nov 7 – Exam
  • Cumulative Exam + film on Cambodia (Rithy Panh, “The Missing Picture”)

Tu, Nov 14 – Transitional Justice in Cambodia (Culture & the Problem of Universality)
  • selections from Hinton, The Justice Facade (downstream prevention)

Tu, Nov 21 – New Challenges: Digital Technologies, Climate Change, and China/Uyghur
  • HR & Social Media / Uyghur / Climate Change

Tu, Nov 28 – No Class (Thursday classes)

Tu, Dec 5 – Human Rights, Prevention, and the U.S.
  • Pompeo / Pomper / Weisel bio / Power, “Never Again” (2 pg)

Sat/Sun, Dec 9/10 (free period) – Intl Genocide and Human Rights Days (75th Anniversary)

Tu, Dec 12 – Presentations
  • essay due Sun, Dec 10