**The Politics of Rights**

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**Course Description**

There are few legal, normative, and political issues more important than the efforts and struggles surrounding rights. It could be argued that democratic political systems rest much of their legitimacy upon the claim that they guarantee certain fundamental rights for citizens. In this course, students will study the multifaceted character of rights discourse and struggles. The varied origins of rights narratives will be explored, as well as the controversies over the extension and effectiveness of rights to diverse populations.

**Course Requirements & Grades**

Students will write two exams, and ten response papers. Participation and attendance are required.

Exams @ 100 points each =200

Response Papers =100

Total =300

Letter Grade Single Exam Grade Cumulative Grade

A 93 - 100 279 - 300

A- 90 - 92 270 - 278

B+ 87 - 89 261 - 269

B 83 - 86 249 - 260

B- 80 - 82 240 - 248

C+ 77 - 79 231 - 239

C 73 - 76 219 - 230

C- 70 - 72 210 - 218

D+ 67 - 69 201 - 209

D 63 - 66 189 - 200

D- 60 - 62 180 - 188

F < = 59 < = 179

# RESPONSE PAPERS

Students are required to write **twelve** response papers (see schedule/due dates below). The response papers should be 1 single-spaced page, 12-point font. The papers should be thoughtful engagements with a major theme or idea presented in the texts. After picking a theme, or set of themes, you should very briefly summarize the theme/idea; then, you should proceed to put forward your own ideas, points of agreement/disagreement, etc. Each paper is due at the beginning of class in which a given set of readings will be discussed.

**Texts**

There are 10 required books for this course (available at Little Professor Bookstore), as well as a number of readings posted on Blackboard (BB). Understanding law requires lots of reading and writing; so, be prepared for lots of text. But, just think, the reward may involve you becoming one of the great rights leaders of the (post) modern era. Who knows?

The texts are:

*The Politics of Rights* by Stuart Scheingold

*The Alchemy of Race and Rights* by Patricia Williams

*Rights Talk* by Mary Ann Glendon

*Distorting the Law* by Haltom and McCann

*When Affirmative Action Was White* by Ira Katznelson

*Silent Covenants* by Derrick Bell

*The Civil Rights Society* by Kristin Bumiller

*Partner to the Poor* by Paul Farmer

*Human Rights and Gender Violence* by Sally Engle Merry

*Overseers of the Poor* by John Gilliom

**Course Schedule**

Th, 8/28: Course Introduction

**Rights, Law, Violence**

Th, 9/4: Read: “Why the Haves Come Out Ahead” by Marc Galanter (BB)

“The Law is All Over” by Austin Sarat (BB)

“Violence and the Word” by Robert Cover (BB)

“Conformity, Contestation, and Resistance” by Patricia Ewick and Susan Silbey (BB)

Response 1 Due Wednesday, 9/3; posted to Blackboard by 8 p.m.

**Rights, Community, Meaning, Victims**

Th, 9/11: Read: *Rights Talk* by Mary Ann Glendon

Response 2 Due Wednesday, 9/10; posted to Blackboard by 8 p.m.

Th, 9/18: Read: *The Civil Rights Society* by Kristin Bumiller

Response 3 Due Wednesday, 9/17; posted to Blackboard by 8 p.m.

Th, 9/25: Read: *Distorting the Law* by Haltom and McCann

Response 4 Due Wednesday, 9/24; posted to Blackboard by 8 p.m.

**Rights, Politics**

Th, 10/2: Read: *Politics of Rights* by Stuart Scheingold

Response 5 Due Wednesday, 10/1; posted to Blackboard by 8 p.m.

Th, 10/9: Read: *Overseers of the Poor* by John Gilliom

Response 6 Due Wednesday, 10/8; posted to Blackboard by 8 p.m.

**Th, 10/16: Midterm Exam**

**“To Fulfill These Rights” (LBJ)**

Th, 10/23: Read: *When Affirmative Action Was White* by Ira Katznelson

Response 7 Due Wednesday, 10/22; posted to Blackboard by 8 p.m.

Th, 10/30: Read: *Silent Covenants* by Derrick Bell, Introduction and Chapters 1 to 9

Response 8 Due Wednesday, 10/29; posted to Blackboard by 8 p.m.

Th, 11/6: Read: *Silent Covenants,* Chapters 10 to 15, and Conclusion

Response 9 Due Wednesday, 11/5; posted to Blackboard by 8 p.m.

**“…a political mechanism that can confront the denial of need.” (P. Williams)**

Th, 11/13: Read: *The Alchemy of Race and Rights* by Patricia Williams

Response 10 Due Wednesday, 11/12; posted to Blackboard by 8 p.m.

**Human Rights Struggles**

Th, 11/20: Read: *Partner to the Poor* by Paul Farmer (selections)

Response 11 Due Wednesday, 11/19; posted to Blackboard by 8 p.m.

Th, 11/27: Thanksgiving Day (no class)

Th, 12/4: Read: *Partner to the Poor* by Paul Farmer (selections)

Read: *Human Rights and Gender Violence* by Sally Engle Merry

Response 12 Due Wednesday, 12/3; posted to Blackboard by 8 p.m.

**Final Exam**