



Human Rights Exercises for the University Classroom

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INTRODUCTION

University Classroom Exercises have been designed to assist instructors of human rights by supplying a week's worth of time-tested one-day curricula for the classroom. The Exercises serve as practical supplements to instructors' current course syllabus, and may assist as well in generating new courses on Human Rights where none presently exists in the college or university classroom.

The Exercises virtually wrote themselves during years of teaching interdisciplinary undergraduate courses in human rights at the University of California at Berkeley. International human rights courses that are key to the development of that field of study are growing at an exponential rate around the world. The author's philosophy of teaching calls for engaging students at an interactive rather than a passive note-taking level; that philosophy is well-served by these Exercises. We encourage other human rights instructors using this manual to send in Exercises from your classes.

Efforts have been expended in these Exercises to offer instructors a substantive, stand-alone, one-page Exercise that can be carried out in the human rights classroom in approximately an hour and a half, with a minimum of preparation. Every Exercise develops students' grasp in some way of principles, methodologies, and *realpolitik* that are of direct use to the students. Every Exercise enhances students' ability to grasp essentials of the field in a cognitively-useful way, whether they plan a career in human rights, are interested in learning about human rights for reasons of good citizenship, or because the course answers requirements for graduation.

It is hoped that the Exercises will stimulate many more Exercises by faculty teaching human rights. Please send your favorite human rights Exercise to the Editor, so that it can be added online and to the manual. Overall, we hope that the Exercises contribute to substantive, widespread and more frequent university courses on International Human Rights. We look forward to your feed-back.

Rita Maran, Ph.D.

6/08 Berkeley



90 min

Early in the semester

CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

Working with: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights



GOALS:

- Students strengthen their ability to review international documents relatively quickly, in order to single out particular elements for analysis
- Students work with actual UN documents, in order to understand their applicability: Country X 's report to the Human Rights Committee, and the Human Rights Committee's reply to Country X. This teaches about the work of the UN Committees, the principles and specifics of this particular treaty, and enforcement mechanisms of the United Nations



MATERIALS:

Each student has :

- a copy of the *ICCPR*, available at:
http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_ccpr.htm
See bibliography for reference

Each group of 3 students has:

- one section of Country X's report to the Human Rights Committee
OR
•one section of the Human Rights Committee's reply to Country X



INSTRUCTOR DOES THE FOLLOWING:

- 1 Explains the goals of the exercise: 1) That there are two kinds of documents being handed out- one from a reporting country, the other from the Human Rights Committee. 2) Instructor makes clear that each document is only a very small part of a voluminous report, and that this exercise requires resourcefulness and flexibility by students
 - 2 Divides students into convenient groups of 3
 - 3 Hands out to each group a randomly-selected short section of Country X's report to the Human Rights Committee OR hands out a randomly-selected short section of the Human Rights Committee's Report to Country X
 - 4 Has students read and compare Country X's report on implementation of one particular Article of the treaty with the requirements laid out in that Article of the treaty
 - 5 Circulates among all the groups to further explain the exercise and answer questions
- Has each group report their findings to the class by a selected spokesperson
 - Has other students in each group add their comments or questions



90 min

Shortly after the beginning of the semester

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Working with: International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)



GOALS:

- Students strengthen their ability to review international documents relatively quickly, in order to single out particular elements for analysis
- Students work with actual UN documents, in order to understand their applicability: Country X 's report to the Human Rights Committee, and the Human Rights Committee's reply to Country X. This teaches about the work of the UN Committees, the principles and specifics of this particular treaty, and enforcement mechanisms of the United Nations



MATERIALS:

Each student has :

- a copy of the *ICCPR*, available at:
http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_ccpr.htm
See bibliography for reference

Each group of 3 students has:

- one section of Country X's report to the Human Rights Committee
OR
•one section of the Human Rights Committee's reply to Country X



INSTRUCTOR DOES THE FOLLOWING:

- 1 Explains the goals of the exercise: 1) That there are two kinds of documents being handed out- one from a reporting country, the other from the Human Rights Committee. 2) Instructor makes clear that each document is only a very small part of a voluminous report, and that this exercise requires resourcefulness and flexibility by students
 - 2 Divides students into convenient groups of 3
 - 3 Hands out to each group a randomly-selected short section of Country X's report to the Human Rights Committee OR hands out a randomly-selected short section of the Human Rights Committee's Report to Country X
 - 4 Has students read and compare Country X's report on implementation of one particular Article of the treaty with the requirements laid out in that Article of the treaty
 - 5 Circulates among all the groups to further explain the exercise and answer questions
- Has each group report their findings to the class by a selected spokesperson
- 5 • Has other students in each group add their comments or questions



90 min

Shortly after the beginning of the semester

TORTURE

Working with: Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)



GOALS:

- Students strengthen their ability to review international documents relatively quickly, in order to single out particular elements for analysis
- Students handle actual UN documents, in order to understand their application: Country X 's report to CAT Committee, and CAT Committee's reply to Country X. This teaches about the work of the UN Committees, the principles and specifics of this particular treaty, and enforcement mechanisms of the United Nations



MATERIALS:

Each student has:

- a copy of the *Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* available at:
<http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/cat.htm>
See bibliography for reference

Each group of 3 students has:

- one section of Country X's Report to the CAT Committee
OR
- one section of CAT Committee's reply to Country X



INSTRUCTOR DOES THE FOLLOWING:

- 1 Explains the goals of the exercise: 1) That there are two kinds of documents being handed out- one from a reporting country, the other from the CAT Committee. 2) Instructor makes clear that each document is only a very small part of a voluminous report, and that this exercise requires resourcefulness and flexibility by students
- 2 Divides class into convenient groups of 3
- 3 Hands out to each group a randomly-selected short section of Country X's Report to CAT Committee,
OR
Hands out randomly-selected short section of CAT Committee's Report to Country X
- 4 Has students read and compare Country X's report on implementation of one particular Article of the treaty with the requirements laid out in that Article of the treaty.
- 5 Circulates among all the groups to further explain exercise and answer questions.
- 6 Has each group report their findings to the class by a selected spokesperson.
- 7 Has other students in each group add their comments or questions.



90 min

After the second
week

THE DAILY NEWSPAPER

Working on: Articles on human rights or the UN, clipped from an accredited newspaper



GOALS:

- Students become aware of human rights and UN issues as they are presented in daily newspapers
- Students strengthen their ability to think critically on current, difficult issues
- Students become more comfortable working with the principles and specifics of international human rights instruments in an objective, non-partisan way



MATERIALS:

- Each student brings to class a relevant clipping on some aspect of human rights and/or the United Nations. The clipping must be from a current daily newspaper of record: e.g., NY Times, LA Times, Christian Science Monitor, Wall Street Journal, etc. It may not be a printout downloaded from an Internet news source, or copied from a magazine, a book, or other materials
- The student attaches his/her question or comment to the clipping



INSTRUCTOR DOES THE FOLLOWING:

- 1 Has each student address the class, to synthesize the newspaper article and contextualize it in terms of the semester's studies in international human rights law. Students perceive how accurately - or not - the media deal with issues raised in this course, the kind of editorials written about the issue, and the importance of citizens' expressions of interest in human rights matters in Letters to the Editor.



90 min

Mid-semester

RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Working with: Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)



GOALS:

- Students learn about this new international human rights treaty, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) with a special focus on the equality and non-discrimination provisions



MATERIALS:

Each student has:

- a copy of the CRPD
- A list of the states that have ratified the treaty;
<<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/edumat/hreduseries/TB6/index2.html>>



INSTRUCTOR DOES THE FOLLOWING:

1. Divides the class into two groups. Ask one group (Group 5) to read and discuss the meaning of Article 5. Ask the other group (Group 2) to read and discuss the meaning of Article 2.
2. One by one, students in Group 5 report to the class, reading aloud from the treaty and discussing some of the language in Article 5. Then students in Group 2 report to the class, one by one, reading aloud from the treaty and discussing some of the language in Article 2.
3. Students discuss how the rights to equality and non-discrimination can be enjoyed and can make a difference for people with disabilities
4. Students discuss how Article 5 and 2 of the CRPD might be used to set national disability rights agendas and formulate platforms of action for submission to political parties or government decision-makers.
5. With thanks to Human Rights. YES! Action and Advocacy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for permission to include this revised Exercise. (Minnesota, 2007) pg 33.
<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/edumat/hreduseries/TB6/index2.html>



90 min

Midway through the semester

OPEN BOOK/MOCK EXAM

Working on: Open-Book Mock Exam consisting of 12 questions, the answers to which must be found in an authoritative reference book



GOALS:

- Students become more adept at reading and scanning international instruments as they search for particular information that answers a specific question
- Students learn to pay close attention to the language used to ask an international human rights law question, and to the language of the information contained in the instruments
- Students understand more about the principles and goals of international human rights instruments
- Through their answers to the Mock Exam, students flex their thinking-muscles on what constitutes international human rights law
- Incorrect answers are particularly useful in that they highlight the areas where students have, understandably, some uncertainty or confusion about this body of law



MATERIALS:

For each student:

- 25+ Human Rights Documents (Columbia University, Center for the Study of Human Rights, New York) or an equally-authoritative reference book



INSTRUCTOR DOES THE FOLLOWING

1. Instructor hands out the exam
2. Students work on answering the questions, writing directly on the exam
3. When all have finished writing their answers, each student, in turn, says aloud her/his answer to the next question.
4. All students indicate whether they came to the same answer. If not, they discuss the different answers arrived at by others in the class.
5. Students are encouraged to ask for discussion of varying answers to questions.

SAMPLE: OPEN BOOK MOCK EXAM - HUMAN RIGHTS COURSE
(INCLUDES INSTRUCTOR'S ANSWERS)

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

Answers should be very brief. Please be sure to give the correct cite for the instrument in question. Example: "Yes, Article 5 (a)(i)" or "No, Article 10 (e)," etc. Once you have cited an Article precisely, you do not need to quote the text.

1. In the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, is "work" a right, a duty, or both? Please give cite(s).

Article 14 - a right - p.179, and Article 37 - a duty.

2. Once a State has ratified a treaty, are there circumstances in which it may derogate from some treaty obligations? Please answer Yes or No.

Yes.

3. Does the United Nations Charter authorize the U.N. to intervene in matters essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state? Please answer Yes or No, with relevant cite.

No. Article 2 (7) p. 1

4. How many States' ratifications or accessions were required in order for the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to enter into force? Please give cite.

35 states - Article 49 - p.28

5. To what earlier international instruments does ILO Convention 169 specifically refer, in its preamble?

1957 Ind Pops Conv and Recommendation; UDHR; ICESCR; ICCPR; intl instr on prevention of discrimination.

6. To which UN human rights body do UN Special Rapporteurs submit their reports?

Human Rights Council

7. Do "covenants," declarations," "treaties" and "conventions" have the same legal force under international human rights law? Please answer Yes or No.

No.

8. State whether the Universal Declaration of Human Rights deals with one, some, or all of the following categories of rights: civil, political, economic, social, cultural.

All.

9. What does the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women mean by "discrimination?" Please give cite; quotation is not necessary.

Article 1 p.49

10. Under the U.N. Charter, which body is assigned responsibility for "assisting in the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms..."?

ECOSOC p. 2

11. Under the American Convention on Human Rights, is there a right to peaceful assembly with arms? Yes or No, with cite only.

NO Article 15 p.133

12. Does the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights prohibit torture?

Yes. Art. 5.



90 min

Towards the end of
the semester

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Working with: Human rights education website www.humanrightseducation.org and NGOs' brochures



GOALS:

- Students become familiar with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), also known as non-profits, in terms of NGOs' capacity to disseminate information about human rights at the grassroots level
- Students learn that most if not all NGOs, active players in civil society, are in a position to carry out the aspirations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in the five categories of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights



MATERIALS:

Each student has a copy of all of the following:

- United Nations Charter, Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, and three core human rights treaties (see Introduction)
- One document of one NGO (brochure, flyer, appeal letter, annual report, etc.), randomly chosen from pile of NGO documents made available by instructor



INSTRUCTOR DOES THE FOLLOWING:

- 1 Asks students to read through the website <humanrightseducation.org> before coming to class
- 2 Explains the goals of the exercise
- 3 Has each student randomly choose one NGO brochure, flyer, or other or flyer, etc
- 4 Has each student read and discuss her/his NGO brochure with the 2 other students in their group. The result is that each group goes over 3 NGOs' brochures and comprehends the correlation with human rights norms, whether civil, political, economic, social, or cultural.
- 5 Has each student select a quotation from any of the international instruments that relates to his/her NGO's work
- 6 Has each student write a relevant quotation (more than one, if applicable) on the brochure; e.g., "UN Charter Article 1(2)."
- 7 Has each student do a 2-minute presentation to the class on what the NGO does, and how the quotation the student has selected from a human rights treaty relates to the NGO's work



90 min

End of the semester

DEBATE (Oxford Union Format)

Working on: debatable human rights issues such as: Torture, Death Penalty, Universality and Cultural Relativism, Affirmative Action/Racial Discrimination, Female genital Circumcision (one topic is chosen by students)



GOALS:

- Students strengthen their ability to think critically on burning issues and to express a *pro* or *con* point of view authoritatively
- Students become comfortable working with the principles and specifics of international human rights instruments studied throughout the semester



MATERIALS:

Each student has a copy of all of the following:

- United Nations Charter, Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, and three core human rights treaties (see Introduction)
- Required and suggested reading lists of the entire semester



INSTRUCTOR DOES THE FOLLOWING:

1. Divides the class, randomly, into a *pro* group and a *con* group, several weeks prior to classroom debate.
2. Has the students decide on the topic of the debate. For example, "Should the death penalty be abolished?" or "Is there such a thing as "universal human rights" in our multicultural world?"
3. Has the students do their research several weeks before classroom debate. Research should use as many primary sources as possible - good training for writing course papers.
4. In the week before the debate, has students on each side choose who on *Pro* team will lead off with Opening Statement and with first Rebuttal to opposing side. Same procedure for *Con* team.
5. Facilitates the debate, in which all students are required to participate. Students must include references to the language of the treaty in question.
6. At the end of the debate, has students vote on which side presented the most convincing arguments

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