This seminar focuses on central human rights problems and issues in contemporary global society. Our focus is primarily to understand these problems in a sociological frame of reference. The seminar is topical and focuses on some of the more visible issues in the field of human rights: the rise of the humanitarian impulse, modern day humanitarianism, genocide and genocide prevention, slavery in modernity, and poverty as a human rights issue. In addition to reading deeply in these areas, students will prepare a 20-25 page term paper on a topic of their choice and work in close consultation with me throughout the semester.

Course Texts:

Below are the main texts for the class. These are required and close readings are necessary, so they should be purchased at the bookstore.

Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*. Picador, 2004


David Kennedy, *The Dark Sides of Virtue: Reassessing International Humanitarianism*, 2004


Susan D. Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death*
Class Requirements

Since this is an intensive seminar, class attendance and participation is required. If you miss more than three classes for any reason, you will be asked to withdraw from the class and this will be strictly enforced. Each week, each student will generate two questions based on the class readings for that week for general class discussions. These should be written and brought to class.

Attendance and participation is worth 30 percent of your grade. I will write a qualitative assessment of this part of your grade at the end of the semester. There will be two short papers of 5-7 pages, each worth 15 percent of your grade. Due dates are listed in the syllabus below. 40 percent of your grade will be based on a 20-25 page research paper, which will be the central focus of your outside work in the seminar and due on the last day of final examination period. A three page outline [with annotated bibliography] will be due on Friday, April 2. It is expected that each student will work closely with the professor to produce an intensive piece of independent research and students are advised to begin thinking about a topic as soon as possible and discussing this topic with me.

Course Schedule

February 1: Introduction to the Course: The Structure of Global Human Rights, Problems, and Responses to Human Suffering

Please come to the first class having read the essay “Outsiders: Our Obligations to Those Beyond Our Borders”, by Peter Singer and “On Disbelieving Atrocities” by Arthur Koestler. Nota Bene: these are not in the e-reserve folder, but have been sent to the course conference SOC302-01-F10 as pdf attachments. You should have that folder on your desktops if you are registered for the class.

February 8: Social Suffering and the Problem of Representation

Susan Sontag, Regarding the Pain of Others, in entirety

Nota Bene: All of the above readings by Kleinman, Morris, and Langer, can be found posted on the course conference as pdf files, they are not in e-reserve.

February 15: No Class, President’s Day

February 16: The Rise of Humanitarianism

Read: Adam Hochschild, Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free the Empire’s Slaves. Mariner Books
Thomas Cushman, review of David Martin, Does Christianity Cause War? (e-reserve)

February 22: Modern Humanitarianism and Humanitarian Intervention

Read: David Kennedy. The Dark Sides of Virtue: Reassessing International Humanitarianism, in entirety

March 1: Global Slavery in Modernity

Read: Kevin Bales, Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy (in entirety)

First Paper Due on March 8

March 8, March 15, April 5: Genocide in the Modern World

Read: Samantha Power, A Problem from Hell: America in the Age of Genocide
Thomas Cushman, “Is Genocide Preventable: Some Theoretical Considerations”? (e-reserve)

Spring Break: Monday 22, no class – Nota Bene: I will be away from Wellesley on Monday 29th, so we will not have seminar then. I would like you to work on your term paper outline with annotated bibliography that day and week in lieu of class and this outline should be emailed to me by Friday, April 5. I will have special office hours that week to discuss the papers. The research librarian assigned to the Sociology Department, Laura Reiner at the Clapp Library, has extensive experience in human rights has graciously agreed to meet with members of the seminar to discuss research strategies, sources, etc.
April 12, April 22: Poverty and Health Care as Human Rights Issues

Paul Farmer, *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor* Note: small groups of students will be organized to focus in and present material about the various cases in the book)

April 26: Compassion Fatigue and Indifference

Read: Susan Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death* (in entirety)

**Second Essay Due, in class April 22**

May 3: Students’ presentations of their research – each student will offer a 10-12 minute presentation of the basic of ideas of their independent research papers.