

American Political Science Association Organized Section on Human Rights

Issue No. 8

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Message From the President (Mark Gibney)

Most of this report relates to events surrounding the APSA annual meeting in Philadelphia. There will be a “short course” on “Teaching Human Rights” the Wednesday afternoon before the conference begins. If you are interested in attending (cost is free) simply send me an email (mgibney@unca.edu). There will also be a “working group” on Human Rights that Ron Ahnen of St. Mary’s College has graciously agreed to coordinate. For those attending the conference, I have listed the Human Rights Section sponsored panels. Attendance is vital and helps to determine the number of slots we will get at next year’s annual meeting. Speaking of which, I have enclosed Julie Mertus’ call for papers for next year.

The Human Rights Section Business Meeting will take place on Friday evening at 6 p.m. in Pennsylvania Convention Center 201 C. This will be followed by a social gathering at Ly Michaels Restaurant where there will be free booze – yes, you heard me correctly.

In this issue I have also enclosed some other information not related to the annual meeting. One involves the International Human Rights Obligation Network, and the other is an initiative on the U.N. Human Rights Council.

APSA Human Rights Panels 2006

- 45-1 Author Meets Critics: William J. Talbott, Which Rights Should Be Universal?
Thursday, Aug 31, 2 pm
- 45-2 Explaining Human Rights and Governmental Accountability
Friday, Sep 1, 8:00 AM
- 45-3 Power and Human Rights
Thursday, Aug 31, 10:15 AM
- 45-4 Reconsidering Democracy and Human Rights in the Emerging Constellation of Transnational Power
Saturday, Sep 2, 10:15 AM
- 45-5 Explaining Global Human Rights Violations
Friday, Sep 1, 2:00 PM
- 45-6 Conceptions of Human Rights
Friday, Sep 1, 10:15 AM
- 45-7 International Law, Terrorism, and Human Rights
Saturday, Sep 2, 8:00 AM
- 45-8 Human Rights in Comparative Perspective: Africa and the Middle East
Thursday, Aug 31, 8:00 AM
- 45-9 Domestic and International Factors Affecting Adherence to Human Rights
Friday, Sep 1, 4:15 PM
- 45-10 Human Rights in Comparative Perspective: Latin America and Asia
Saturday, Sep 2, 10:15 AM
- 45-11 Social Movements and Rights-Based Strategies: New Research from the Field
Thursday, Aug 31, 4:15 PM

Short Course to Focus on “Teaching Human Rights”

There will be an APSA-sponsored Short Course on “Teaching Human Rights” on Wednesday afternoon (Aug. 30) from 1-5. The panels and panelists are listed below:

I. A “basic” undergraduate course on “Human Rights”

Beth Dougherty (Beloit College)
Anthony Chase (Occidental College)
Lisa MacLeod (Soka University)
M. Victoria Perez-Rios (John Jay College)
Bill Simmons (Arizona State)
Zehra Arat (SUNY-Purchase)
Hideo Hashimoto (University of Tennessee)
Shareen Hertel (University of Connecticut)
Julie Mertus (American University)

II. A “Human Rights” Intensive Course

Bethany Barratt (Roosevelt University)
Ken Ciboski (Wichita State)
Susan Dicklitch (Franklin & Marshall)
Evelyn Tennant (University of Chicago)
Margaret Groarke (Manhattan College)

III. Graduate Education

Todd Landman (University of Essex)

Contact me if you are interested in attending (mgibney@unca.edu). There is no fee to attend. The meeting will be informal, with the emphasis on give-and-take between the “panelists” and the “audience.”

Working Group on Human Rights at APSA

The purpose of the Working Group on Human Rights is to foster discussion and exchange of ideas on various themes related to human rights research and teaching. Themes may include (but are not limited to) challenges to human rights research in both quantitative and qualitative studies, incorporating knowledge from legal studies and political theory to empirical research, the relationship between human rights protections and democratization, the evolving nature of human rights, and different approaches to teaching human rights. The short course on teaching human rights scheduled for Wednesday afternoon is highly recommended though not required for participants of this working group.

Working group members agree to attend a minimum of five panel sessions on human rights and to meet three times as a working group, and will receive a certificate of participation from APSA. The tentative meeting times are: Thursday 12-2 pm, Friday 7-9 pm, and Saturday 12-2 pending feedback from working group participants. We are looking forward to this intellectually stimulating and productive experience. For questions, comments or to enroll as a participant, please send an email with your contact information to the Working Group Coordinator: Ron Ahnen, Assistant Professor of Politics at St. Mary's College of California (rahnens@stmarys-ca.edu).

Human Rights Section Officers

There will be two elections held at our September 1 Business Meeting at the APSA. The offices and the candidates are:

Vice President Elect:

Clair Apodaca (Florida International University)
Lillian Barria (Eastern Illinois University).

Secretary:

Bethany Barratt (Roosevelt University)
Steve Roper (Eastern Illinois University)

FREE BOOZE!

How and why did I know this would get your attention? The Human Rights Business Meeting will take place on Friday September 1 from 6-7 p.m. in the Pennsylvania Convention Center 201C. There will not be any booze at the Business Meeting (although it is not a bad idea), but there will be a reception following immediately at Ly Michaels restaurant -- and everyone who attends will be entitled to a free drink.

APSA 2007: Call for Papers

(send questions or comments to the Human Rights Section Vice President Elect, Professor Julie Mertus, mertus@american.edu)

The APSA Human Rights Section is well-situated to make a strong contribution to the 103rd Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, which seeks to celebrate the interdisciplinary nature of political science and highlight new opportunities for intellectual exchange across disciplinary boundaries. The

field of Human Rights has always been fundamentally multidisciplinary, exchanging ideas, theories, data, and methods among many subfields within political science, as well as from other disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, psychology, philosophy and law. We encourage the submission of thematic panels and papers which underscore the vitality and importance of the multidisciplinary inquiry in the area of Human Rights. Priority will be given to panels that include scholars addressing the same substantive topic with the methods, theories and perspectives of different disciplines.

The 103rd Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association seeks also to expose political scientists to the newest research currents and demonstrate the intellectual vitality of political science. In line with this goal, scholars of human rights are encouraged to present current and ongoing research and to highlight the policy implications of their work. Roundtable discussions on multidisciplinary human rights topics may also provide a solid contribution to the 2007 conference theme.

As in past years, papers, panels and poster presentations not related to the conference theme will also be considered. However, the 2007 conference theme is most open to human rights topics.

Julie Mertus
suitcase@igc.org

International Human Rights Obligations Network (IHRON)

Lancaster University Law School is pleased to announce the establishment of the International Human Rights Obligations Network (IHRON). The aim of this network is to bring academics, civil servants, practitioners and activists together in an electronic network that will facilitate cooperation and the sharing of information and research. IHRON will primarily serve as a resource base and contact point for individuals and groups concerned with the obligations side of human rights protection - broadly defined. For further information about the network and its aims, please see our newly designed web-site:

<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/organisations/humanrights/ihron/index.htm>

Or contact Sigrun Skogly (s.skogly@lancaster.ac.uk)

Advocacy Coalition on the UN Human Rights Council

Statement to the First Plenary Meeting of the Council

18 June 2006

The Advocacy Coalition on the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) is an independent coalition of human rights advocates and academics with expertise in human rights law, policy, or practice. It was formed to examine the agenda and work of the HRC and to analyze and assess its progress according to its expressed mandate and functions. The members of the Advocacy Coalition consider the establishment of the HRC a great opportunity to enhance the United Nations' human rights machinery and would like to help effectively further the promotion and protection of human rights. The first meeting of the Advocacy Coalition was convened at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice of the City University of New York, on June 12, 2006, and identified six areas that will be crucial in defining the character and operations of the Council. The Advocacy Coalition suggests the following:

1. *Special Procedures, Working Groups, and Resolutions* – The special procedures and working groups of the Commission on Human Rights have served important functions ranging from standard setting to fact finding. These institutional arrangements should be continued. The Council should also continue to use resolutions critical of specific countries in a way that would improve country compliance and cooperation. Countries that refuse to comply with the standards or to cooperate with the Council and other UN bodies of human rights investigation and assessment should be considered for further attention and action, including resolutions.
2. *Access by and cooperation with civil society* – Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been crucial to the promotion of human rights and incorporation of human rights into the UN Charter. The Council should permit and encourage extensive access and participation in all aspects of the Council's work by representatives of independent NGOs and experts, based on clearly established guidelines and procedures, at a level no lower than that provided previously at the Commission on Human Rights.
3. *Indivisibility and interdependency of human rights* – The Council should make clear at the outset that its mandate includes the full spectrum of human rights, including economic, social, and cultural rights, whether in peacetime or in armed conflict. It should embrace this holistic approach and ensure that the review process and other activities of the Council

address the fulfillment of *all* human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural.

4. *Universal Periodic Review Criteria* – In order to ensure equal treatment, the Council should identify the criteria and fair and impartial procedures to be used in assessing the states' compliance with the international human rights standards. It should identify indicators of the fulfillment or violation of *all* human rights and evaluate the extent to which rights are enjoyed by *all* persons living within the jurisdiction of the state, without discrimination. In this endeavor, the Council should draw upon the work of UN agencies and other organizations on the development of reliable socio-economic, civil, and political rights indicators and benchmarks.
5. *Special Sessions* – The Council should use special sessions as needed, in particular to address conditions that enable human rights violations and require extra protection mechanisms that fall beyond the means of individual states. Review and assessment mechanisms should be broad in scope, addressing a range of state and non-state actors and issues, including international financial agencies, corporate responsibilities, international trade agreements, and foreign aid.
6. *The responsibility to protect human rights* – The Council should encourage discussion on the mechanisms of prevention of violations of and protection of human rights and contribute, as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, to the ongoing discussion on the operationalization of the “responsibility to protect.”

The Advocacy Coalition wishes the Council a productive session and hopes that the concerns and suggestions raised in this statement will be incorporated into its initial and future discussions. We look forward to supporting, monitoring, and contributing to the work of the Council to help the realization of one of the key aims of the United Nations. We will continue to meet, mobilize and inform our networks, and advance our concerns. The next meeting of the Advocacy Coalition will focus on assessing the Council's progress in its initial weeks of operation with regard to these and other issues, as they arise.

Further information can be obtained by contacting Professors George Andreopoulos (chrights@jjay.cuny.edu; 1-212-237-8314), Zehra F. K. Arat (zehra.arat@purchase.edu; 1-914-251-6610), or Julie Mertus (mertus@american.edu; 1-202-885-2215).

Coalition Members and Signatories: ¹

Hamid Abdeljaber, *United Nations*
Sarah Joy Albrecht, *American University*
George Andreopoulos, *City University of New York*
Zehra Arat, *Purchase College, SUNY*
Juergen Dedring, *City University of New York*
Maryam Elahi, *Trinity College*
Michelle Evans, *International Service for Human Rights*
Natasha Gill, *The New School*
Peter Juviler, *Barnard College & Columbia University*
Julie Mertus, *American University*
Adamantia Pollis, *The New School*
Cynthia Rothschild, *Center for Women's Global Leadership*
Maryum Saifee, *Columbia University*

¹ Affiliations are provided for identification purposes only. Coalition members serve in their individual capacity, and the views given above do not necessarily present those of their institutions.