

VULNERABILITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

PROFESSOR DON KULICK

Fall Term 2016

Wednesdays 10-12 pm

Vulnerability and human rights are intimately intertwined. Human rights advocates argue that rights must be extended to vulnerable populations, but what does vulnerability actually signify and entail? The idea of vulnerability is currently undergoing re-evaluation in philosophy, the social sciences and the humanities. From having been perceived as a condition from which subjects should be defended, rescued or liberated, vulnerability and passivity have increasingly come to be theorized as a position and experience that confronts us with the limits of understanding, empathy, ethics and theory. This course will discuss work that attempts to engage with vulnerability as a challenge that can guide us towards new ways of thinking about and engaging with the world.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Active class participation and presentations. Throughout the course, you will be asked at various points to prepare introductions to the literature. The point of these introductions, which must last no longer than 5 minutes, is to quickly summarize the material and open the discussion to topics that you feel merit attention. These presentations will form part of your final grade.
2. A total of four critical/reaction papers posted on the course site. You may choose whichever four weeks you like. The papers should be about one page in length, at 16 pt. line spacing, Times New Roman font. They may deal with any questions the readings raise for you, such as queries or criticisms you have of the authors' method or argument; connections to other readings; disparities among the readings; implications of the readings for important issues in anthropology or ethnography, and the like.

A guiding rule of engagement in this class is: be generous. The authors we are reading are not stupid, and they have probably considered at some length most of the questions or objections you may raise. With that in mind, engage with the texts in the spirit of dialogue and generosity, not opposition and attack. I put tremendous stock in exegesis and will stress this throughout the class, because in order to engage critically with a text, you need to have really understood what it says. So make sure that you work out the various authors' arguments clearly before you engage in any kind of critique.

To facilitate discussion, the papers must be posted by 8 am on the Wednesday on which the material is to be discussed. Everyone should take 30 minutes before class to read through the papers that have been posted there. These papers will not be graded but they obviously should make it evident that you have read the relevant literature.

3. A final paper that uses the literature to discuss the relationship between vulnerability and human rights. The paper should primarily be exegetical and must range over a number of the arguments developed by scholars whose works we read during the course.

This paper is due by Friday 29 October at noon. Put a hard copy of the paper in my mailbox in the Anthropology Department, and email me the paper as an attachment to don.kulick@antro.uu.se.

Length: no more than 10 pages, excluding title page and bibliography (Times New Roman 12 pt. font, double spaced, 1 inch margins on all sides). Do not use footnotes. Do not forget to number the pages.

REQUIRED BOOKS

You are expected to buy the following books and you must read them thoroughly before class.

- Coetzee, J.M. 1999. *The Lives of Animals*. Princeton University Press.
 Derrida, Jacques 2008. *The Animal that Therefore I Am*. Fordham University Press.
 Hunt, Lynn 2007. *Inventing Human Rights: a history*. WW Norton.
 Foucault, Michel 1978. *The history of sexuality, Vol. 1*. Any edition.
 Kulick, Don & Jens Rydström 2015. *Loneliness and its Opposite: sex, disability and ethical engagement*. Duke University Press.
 Nussbaum, Martha 2007. *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership*. Harvard University Press.
 Tuner, Bryan S. 2006. *Vulnerability and Human Rights*. The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Book chapters will be provided, you should find the articles online.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Session 1. Introduction, 14 September

Tuner, Bryan S. 2006. *Vulnerability and Human Rights*. The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Foucault, Michel 1978. *The history of sexuality, Vol. 1*. Any edition.

Note: you are expected to have read both these books before the first class. Be ready to summarize and discuss them.

Session 2. Nussbaum on the capabilities approach, 21 September

Nussbaum, Martha 2007. *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership*. Harvard University Press.

Session 3. The history of human rights, 5 October

Hunt, Lynn 2007. *Inventing Human Rights: a history*. WW Norton.

Arendt, Hannah 1968. The decline of the nation-state and the end of the rights of man. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 267-302.

Session 4. Animals, vulnerability and human rights, 12 October

Berger, John 2007 (1972). Why look at animals? In *The Animals Reader*, edited by Linda Kalof and Amy Fitzgerald. Bloomsbury Academic.

Descartes, Rene 2007. From letters of 1646 and 1649. In *The Animals Reader*, edited by Linda Kalof and Amy Fitzgerald. Bloomsbury Academic.

Heidegger, Martin 1995. *The fundamental concepts of metaphysics: world, finitude, solitude*. Indiana University Press, read pages to be determined.

Derrida, Jacques 2002. The animal that therefore I am (more to follow). *Critical Inquiry* 28 (2): 369-418. NOTE: this long article has also been published as a book by Fordham University Press and has been ordered for the course. Read the text in either format.

– 2003. And say the animal responded? In *Zoontologies: the question of the animal*, edited by Cary Wolfe. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 121-46, and included in *The Animal that therefore I am* volume.

– 1991. 'Eating well', or the calculation of the subject: an interview with Jacques Derrida. In *Who Comes After the Subject?*, edited by Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor and Jean-Luc Nancy. London: Routledge, 96-119; Read only pages 111-18.

Coetzee, J.M. 1999. *The Lives of Animals*. Princeton University Press. Read pages 1-69 and Barbara Smut's commentary, pages 107-120.

Session 5. Ethical engagement, 19 October

Kulick, Don & Jens Rydström 2016. *Loneliness and its Opposite: sex, disability and ethical engagement*. Duke University Press.

Young, Iris Marion 1997. "Asymmetrical Reciprocity: On Moral Respect, Wonder and Enlarged Thought." *Constellations* 3 (3): 340-63.

Kulick, Don 2015. The problem of speaking for the other *redux*: insistence on disclosure and the ethics of engagement. *Knowledge Cultures* 3 (6): 7-27.

Session 6. The face of the Other, 26 October

Levinas, Emmanuel 1951. Is ontology fundamental? In *Emmanuel Levinas: basic philosophical writings*, edited by Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi, 1996, Indiana University Press.

– 1988. Useless suffering. In *The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other*, edited by Robert Bernasconi and David Wood. Routledge (156-167)

– 1990. The name of a dog, or natural rights. In *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, translated by Sean Hand. Johns Hopkins University Press (151-53)

Levinas, Emmanuel and Richard Kearney 1986. Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas. In *Face To Face With Levinas*, edited by Richard A. Cohen. State University of New York Press, (13-33)

Wright, Tamra, Peter Hughes, Alison Ainley 1988. The paradox of morality: an interview with Emmanuel Levinas. In *The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other*, edited by Robert Bernasconi and David Wood. Routledge (168-80).

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is obligatory. You are allowed one unexcused absence, which must be made up by submitting a 5-page paper that summarizes the literature read during the week of the absence. This paper must be turned in, in class, the week following the absence. Two absences during the term will result in an automatic fail grade.

INCOMPLETE

You cannot receive an Incomplete in this class.

POLICY ON LATE ASSIGNMENTS

No late papers will be accepted.

USE OF COMPUTERS AND CELL PHONES IN CLASS

Please turn off and put away all cell phones and computers during class.

TOPE OF CRITIQUE IN CLASS

READ THIS QUOTE FROM JOHN RAWLS AND KEEP IT IN MIND WHEN ENGAGING WITH THE LITERATURE

I always assumed...that the writers we were studying were always much smarter than I was...If I saw a mistake in their arguments, I supposed they saw it too and must have dealt with it, but where? So I looked for their way out, not mine. Sometimes their way out was historical: in their day the question need not be raised; or wouldn't arise or be fruitfully discussed. Or there was a part of the text I had overlooked, or hadn't read.