

ROLE PLAYING EXERCISE

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS: PRACTICE AND MECHANISMS OF REDRESS IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WORLD

**TO BE PRESENTED AT THE 2007 APSA TEACHING AND
LEARNING CONFERENCE**

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ROLE PLAYING EXERCISE: INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS: PRACTICE AND MECHANISMS OF REDRESS IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WORLD

The course GOV 320: International Human Rights is an elective and as such it is opened to students of diverse interests and backgrounds. Thus, I need to focus the thrust of my lectures and class time on explaining the theoretical aspects of human rights (concepts, basics of international law, and main discussions), which leaves little time for examining how human rights are implemented in different countries/regions of the world. As a way to overcome these time constraints, last Fall I designed and implemented a role playing exercise to be completed to a great extent during out of class time by the students.

During my presentation at the 2007 APSA Teaching and Learning Conference, I will briefly address the following issues: Goals of the exercise, Brief Description of the Mechanics of the Role-Playing Exercise, and Evaluation of the Implementation of the Role-Playing exercise.

I. GOALS OF THE EXERCISE

- a. Show the complexity of human rights (definition/standard setting/implementation).
- b. Familiarize students with different international legal instruments on human rights protection and redress mechanisms (duties to end abuses and practice).
- c. Learn about human rights in other countries and compare human rights practice abroad with the situation in the US (one group focused on human rights in the US)

II. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE MECHANICS OF THE ROLE-PLAYING EXERCISE

During the first day of classes, the students were assigned to a team and a country/region, - Africa, Latin America, Western Europe, the Middle East, and the US. Due to the small class size (14 students), Asia was not included. However, Cambodia, China and India figured prominently in our in class discussions.

During the second week of classes I posted the general and team specific instructions on BB and gave one of the members of each group a hard copy which included such instructions and relevant articles to initiate their research. My role was that of the secretariat. Thus, I was specifically in charge of the procedural aspects of the exercise. In practice, I also influenced content.

Each group had their own individualized discussion forum, accessible to me but not to the other students. Since as a rule the students needed extra time to complete the assignment and to avoid interference with preparation for the midterm (week 7), the postings were allowed after week 5 of the semester.

Once all the posting were completed, I made the official announcement of the presentation dates and I made accessible a discussion forum where each team had to post its presentation outline and make it available to the rest of the class. Discussants and rapporteurs were chosen before each of the presentations.

Each team's presentation lasted 20 to 25 minutes and was followed by the questions of the discussants and of other members of the class. A week and a half later the students gave me the papers for final evaluation. Although incorporating the comments of the discussants was included as part of the exercise, the majority of the papers were limited to an elaboration of what was presented by team members.

The following is a copy of the general and specific instructions for team Africa (Fig. 1) and a view of the aforementioned discussion fora in BB (Fig. 2).

- **FIGURE 1: GENERAL AND SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS FOR TEAM AFRICA**

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| John Jay College of Criminal Justice | |
| Fall 2006 | |
| G0V 320. International Human Rights | Prof. M. Victoria |
| Pérez-Ríos | |
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| <u>ROLE PLAYING EXERCISE (30 points)</u> | |
| INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS: PRACTICE AND MECHANISMS OF REDRESS IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WORLD | |
| I. GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS | |
| a. POSTINGS TO BLACKBOARD (5 points) | |
| Each member of the team is expected to post to BlackBoard (BB), - at least once per week, - his/her findings relative to human rights abuses and accomplishments, and ways of redressing such abuses in the area chosen [weeks 3-5 of the semester]. | |
| Then you should agree on the document outline to make public on BB to the rest of the class. Each team will write and post on BB an outline of its findings covering the practice of human rights (positive and negative developments), recommendations for improvement, and mechanisms of redress adopted from three perspectives (advocacy NGOs, government officials, and victims). Since the perspectives represented will contradict each other in same cases, explain why it happens and ways to overcome the contradictions [weeks 6-7 of the semester]. | |
| b. IN CLASS PRESENTATION (10 points) | |

More detailed in class presentation of each team's findings to the rest of the class which will be playing the role of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Answer questions from students who have been previously selected to act as discussants.

c. FINAL PAPER (10 points)

Incorporate relevant points made during the in-class discussion; length: 7-10 pages.

II. GOALS OF THE EXERCISE

- a. Show the complexity of human rights (definition/standard setting/implementation).
- b. Familiarize students with different international legal instruments on human rights protection and redress mechanisms (duties to end abuses and practice).

III. TEAM AFRICA

a. Members

- Student A, Representative of the government
- Student B, Representative of NGOs
- Student C, Representative of Victims

- b. Documents** [I advise you to check the UN website and find additional sources] General information, NGO sources (AI and HRW), US Department of State, International Organizations (AU), Specific issues (Environment, Humanitarian Intervention, and Slavery).

c. Problematic Issues to look at

Effects of colonialism, exploitation of natural resources, famine, widespread diseases (not limited to AIDS/HIV), genocide/ethnic cleansing, slavery, and women's property rights.

• **FIGURE 2: DISCUSSION FORA IN BB**

1 **ROLE PLAYING RULES: SECRETARIAT** Modify Remove

This is where you should send "procedural" queries such as deadlines, length of outlines, role/order of speakers ...

I am using my first posting to paste the general rules of the exercise.

Number of Messages: 3
[1 **New**]

2 **TEAM AFRICA** Modify Remove

This forum is only to be used by members of your team. You are expected to engage in at least an exchange of information per week.

Number of Messages: 10
All read

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 3 | <p><u>TEAM WESTERN EUROPE</u></p> <p>This forum is only to be used by members of your team. You are expected to engage in at least an exchange of information per week.</p> | <p>Modify Remove</p> <p>Number of Messages: 10 [4 New]</p> |
| 4 | <p><u>TEAM LATIN AMERICA</u></p> <p>This forum is only to be used by members of your team. You are expected to engage in at least an exchange of information per week.</p> | <p>Modify Remove</p> <p>Number of Messages: 27 [5 New]</p> |
| 5 | <p><u>TEAM MIDDLE EAST</u></p> <p>This forum is only to be used by members of your team. You are expected to engage in at least an exchange of information per week.</p> | <p>Modify Remove</p> <p>Number of Messages: 8 [2 New]</p> |
| 6 | <p><u>TEAM USA</u></p> <p>This forum is only to be used by members of your team. You are expected to engage in at least an exchange of information per week.</p> | <p>Modify Remove</p> <p>Number of Messages: 7 [3 New]</p> |
| 7 | <p><u>REPORTS FROM THE DIFFERENT REGIONS: POST YOUR OUTLINES HERE</u></p> <p>Dear all,</p> <p>Here you should post the outline so the rest of the class can know what you are going to present to us.</p> <p>Discussants will use this forum to prepare a couple of questions or comments. Basically your role will be to initiate the discussion after the presentation has concluded. Time is important so be prepared to talk five minutes at the most.</p> <p>Ashely and Auriel will be discussants for the Africa Group</p> <p>Niki and Olena will be discussants for the Western Europe Group.</p> <p>For each presentation we will also need a sort of rapporteur (one of you will take notes of the discussion). Rapporteurs will be first chosen from those who have not signed up as discussants.</p> <p>Reminder: 5 points of the Group exercise depend on playing the role of either a discussant or a rapporteur.</p> | <p>Modify Remove</p> <p>Number of Messages: 2 All read</p> |
| 8 | <p><u>SCHEDULE OF PRESENTATIONS</u></p> <p>Africa: Nov. 15</p> <p>Western Europe: Nov. 20</p> | <p>Modify Remove</p> <p>No Messages</p> |

US & Latin America: Nov. 27

Middle East: Nov. 29

| | | |
|--|--------------------------------|---|
| 9 | <u>PAPERS: DEADLINE</u> | Modify Remove |
| <p>Taking into account that the papers are short (3/4 pages per individual) and that you have been studying the assigned region for at least 3 weeks, the papers for full grade consideration are due one WEEK after your presentation.</p> <p>Apart from your individual work, each paper should have a common introduction and conclusion section.</p> | | No Messages |

III. EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ROLE-PLAYING EXERCISE (To be posted when completed).