

LECTURE / DISCUSSION / DEBATE  
HUMAN RIGHTS AND DIFFERENCE

**Terms and concepts to know:**

Human Rights	Nuremberg Trials
Universalism vs. relativism	Universal Declaration (1948)
European Convention (1950)	Intuition and consensus (Donnelly)
Contractualism (Rawls)	Rational entailment (Habermas)
Natural rights (Finnis)	Cruelty and solidarity (Shklar and Rorty)
Difference	Dominant identity
Postmodern 'différance'	Liberal theory and difference
Feminist theory and difference	Democracy and difference

**Study and discussion questions:**

1. Why should states respect human rights?
2. If it can be shown that human rights discourse emerges from a Western tradition does this undermine the claim that they are universal?
3. Is the exercise of human rights compatible with respect for the environment?
4. Is the 'right to welfare' a coherent concept? Why or why not?
5. Examine Chomsky's insights to the concept of 'humanitarian imperialism', and Brimont's critique of the modern concept of 'responsibility to protect' or R2P. Given U.S. history, are these concepts as cynical as they appear?
6. Does a person's identity revolve around one dominant feature? When you 'self-identify' does one aspect of your identity stand out among others?
7. Does the state facilitate the expression of difference among inhabitants? Does the American government enhance or depress this feature?
8. Back in 2008, Justin Smith commented on the differences between Obama and Hillary Clinton, who were competing in the Democratic primary. Analyze his argument and comment on where you agree or disagree with his position.

**Readings:**

Hoffman and Graham: Chapters 18 and 21.

**Video:**

*Torture: Made in USA*, a documentary examining the use of torture by the US in the war on terror.