FOOD, NUTRITION, AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Objectives:
This course will analyze the human right to adequate food and nutrition from legal, political-economic, nutritional, and cultural perspectives. Drawing on international, United States, and developing-country legal and food-and-nutrition policy frameworks, participants will examine the ways international, national, and local efforts fit together to promote (or limit) human rights and freedom from hunger.

Since 1997, human rights has been a central policy framework connecting UN reforms, the follow-up to the global development summits, and government and NGO food-and-nutrition program efforts. Over this same 5-year period, NGOs specializing in human rights, nutrition, and development have joined forces to pressure governments to respect the right to feed oneself. Most recently, the World Food Summit + 5 set the human right to food as a framework for action; over the next two years, individual countries and U.N. agencies will be formulating plans that indicate what actual steps countries could take to ensure that their policies and legislation respect, protect, and fulfill the right to food.

Course readings and written assignments are designed to equip students to access and integrate this growing literature: (a) to analyze, compare, and contrast different approaches to the human right to food and evaluate their effectiveness; (b) to demonstrate, in particular situations, the linkages between human rights performance and food security/adequate nutrition outcomes (c) to describe and critique right-to-food actions or inactions in individual countries (d) to consider the ways community- and country-level "right to food" activities connect to UN Human-Right-to-Food initiatives.

Description:
The course will begin with four sessions reviewing (1) the types and extent of world hunger problems (ecology and politics of food shortage, political-economic causes of insufficient entitlements to food, sociocultural or physiological sources of nutritional deprivation); (2) the legal mechanisms through which the right to food is supposed to be guaranteed by United Nations declarations, covenants, and agencies; (3) the political-economy of food production and distribution, and (4) additional sociocultural constructs that define and limit (a) who is a community member with rights and obligations and (b) what constitutes adequate food, complicate basic human rights questions.

In this analytical process, we will seek answers to four broad comparative questions: (1) how is the human right to food defined and implemented in different legal, moral, and cultural traditions? (2) are there ways in which international, national, and local efforts can be made mutually reinforcing and less conflictual? (3) what linkages and lessons are there between the right to food and other human rights? (4) to achieve the individual right to food, what are the roles of nutrition science and policy in particular national settings?

The next five sessions consider case studies involving the human rights to food, that involve different types of hunger from across political-geographic areas. Topics include: (1) human rights and humanitarian assistance in sub-Saharan Africa (case study on the Sudan); (2) food poverty and the right to food in the U.S.; (3) hunger, poverty, and human rights in Central America; (4) the right to food and its
implications for women and children in India (with special attention to the case of Vitamin A pulse campaigns); (5) food, water, and human rights in the Middle East (which will focus on the Palestinian-Israeli case).

The following 3 sessions will involve student oral reports on the food, nutrition, and human rights situations in particular countries.

A final session will evaluate commonalities across case studies, and up to the moment progress on human rights follow-up to the World Food Summit.

Requirements (Evaluation):
1. Each week--class participation and one-page written critical summary of readings. The critical summary is for discussion purposes only-not graded. The course will be run mainly on a seminar format, and students will be responsible for participation, and helping to lead weekly discussions. (10%)

2. Mid-term, a 8-10 page critical synthesis, evaluating the right to food in the US (20%). This exercise will be based on class readings and discussions.

3. In the third quarter of the term, a 15-20 page research paper and oral presentation, which will analyze the human right to food situation in a developing country. (60%)

4. End of term: One op-ed opinion piece (2-pages, double-spaced) on a human right to food topic. (10%) (Due end of term, but draft can be submitted at mid-term for comments, then revised)

Readings:
Each weekly session will have required and recommended readings, that will form the basis for class discussions. Required readings will be on reserve or available on the internet, where students will be able to draw a number of UN and NGO publications directly off the Web (Url addresses for these readings are provisional, and will be updated where appropriate). The lengthy lists of recommended readings for most weeks are designed provide students with a complete history of human right-to-food reasoning and writings. They are meant to provide a guide to further reading for interested students.

Texts:

ACC-SCN Monitor, No.18 (1999) Adequate Food: A Human Right (Professor will have a limited number of hard copies to distribute; can also be downloaded from the web)

Collier, G., with E. Quaratiello 1994 Basta! Land and the Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas. Oakland, California: Food First Books

There are also 3 recommended publications:


Alston, P. and K. Tomasevski, eds. 1984 Right to Food. The Hague: Nijhoff (also recommended, but very expensive and also difficult to find)

Basic human rights documents are available on the web, on FAO, UNHCHR, and other sites.

Part One:
OVERVIEWS: THEORY, POLICY, AND PRACTICE

1-2 Introduction and Legal Perspectives
- Introduction: What is the right to food? (what are rights? what constitutes safe and adequate food? Who is classified as a human being deserving of rights? How does the human-rights perspective link up with "vulnerability" mapping?)

Handouts: UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); World Food Summit Declaration and Plan of Action Objective 7.4 (to clarify the Right to Food) (1996); World Food Summit +5 documentation on the right to food (2002), a human right-to-food matrix

Readings:

FAO 1998: "Extracts from the International Instruments" (pp.46-48) and "Implementation of the Right to Food in national legislation (pp.40-45)


Recommended:
Eide et al. 1984 The Food Problematique. In Eide, pp.v-xi

Zalaquett, J. 1984 The Relationship Between Development and Human Rights. IN Eide, pp.141-51

Eide, A. 1984 The International Human Rights System. IN Eide, pp.152-61

Alston, P. 1984 International law and the right to food. IN Eide, pp.162-74

Eide, A. 1989 Right to Adequate Food as a Human Right. UN Human-Rights Centre. OR
Eide, A. 1998 The Human Right to Food. (FAO document available on the Internet)
The UNHCR Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. Twentieth Session. Geneva, 16 April to 14 May 1999. 'The Right to Adequate Food'' SCN News No.18, pp.41-45

Vulnerability mapping: FAO 1998: "Identifying the Hungry" (The food insecurity and vulnerability mapping system. FIVIMS, pp.29-34

Alston, P. and A. Eide. Advancing the Right to Food in international law. IN Eide, pp.249-59

Advancing the Right to Food in international food and development strategies. IN Eide, pp.265-86

Eide, A. 1996 Human rights requirements to social and economic development. Food Policy 21,1:23-39


Ferber, D. and M. Enserink 1999 GM Crops...Science 286:1662-1668

3-The Human Right to Food: Political-Economic Perspectives (What are relationships between entitlement and enfranchisement, and access to food? What are the roles of governments, transnational corporations, inter-governmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations in assuring or denying the right to food over the long or short term?)

Readings:
Marchione, T. 1984 Approaches to the hunger problem: A critical overview. IN Eide et al., pp.117-38

George, S. 1990 Overcoming hunger: strengthen the weak, weaken the strong. IN Ill Fares the Land. pp.3-18 (Xerox)

Jones, A. 1999 A Human Rights Approach to Relief and Development Assistance. (excerpt by CARE) (2 page handout)


Recommended:
Marchione, T. 1996 The right to food in the post-Cold War era. Food Policy 21,1:83-102

Country Case Studies: Brazil, South Africa, Indonesia, and General Discussion

Omawale 1984 Note on the concept of entitlement: a bridge between the structural and the human rights approach to understanding food in development. IN Eide, pp.260-64

Jonsson, U. The socioeconomic causes of hunger. IN Eide, pp.473-82


Skogly, W.I. 1996 The role of international NGOs in promoting nutrition rights. Food Policy 21,1:111-21


4 The Human Right to Adequate Food and Nutrition: Social and Cultural Perspectives (Who is defined as a human being and social person, and thereby guaranteed rights by the community? What are the rights to food of minorities or strangers? women, children, or the elderly? What constitutes adequate food? hunger?)

FAO 1998: "Rural Women and the Right to Food" (pp.35-39)


Recommended:


PART TWO: CASE STUDIES. THE RIGHT TO FOOD AND OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS:LINKAGES AND LESSONS

5 The Human Right to Food and Other Human Rights in African Zones of Armed Conflict

Readings:


Recommended:
DeWaal, A. 1997 Famine Crimes. Indiana

6 The right to food in the US: domestic perspectives. (Are hunger standards the same in the US as in the rest of the world? What are the national, state, and community legal protections against hunger in the US? How does the US legislative process on the right to food work?

Readings:

U.S. Congress House Committee on International Relations Subcommittee on International Resources, Food and Energy. (1976) Right to Food Resolution. Hearings Before the Subcommittee on International Resources...of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 94th Congress, Second Session, on H. Concurrent $. 393 (recommended: testimony by Art Simon, Director of Bread for the World, and by Congressman Paul Simon, his brother; also by Blake, Martin, Grant. Skim quickly through the book to get a sense of how the human right to food issues were framed and presented in the mid-1970s, immediately after the Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights was entered into force)


Mittal, A. and P. Rosset, eds. 1999 America Needs Human Rights. Oakland, California: Food First Books. Read Introduction to Part Four. "Human Rights for America" (pp.135-138) and skim other chapters that pique your interest.

Handouts:
**Up-to-date commentaries on current U.S. position
Food First (Institute for Food and Development Policy) and FIAN (Food First information and action network news), which refer to opinion pieces and background papers, which are electronically published. Also, bibliographies of current articles describing U.S. food and nutrition policy, including impacts of current cutbacks and restructuring of benefits into block grants.

Recommended:

Skim reports on the state of hunger in America on the website of America's Second Harvest, the U.S. food-banking network.

Midterm assignment on the Right to Food in the US is due

7. Land, Labor, and the Right to Food in Latin America. How is the right to food connected to the right to work (fair working conditions and compensation) and the right to land in Latin America?

Readings:

OAS Additional Protocol To the American Convention on Human Rights
http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/Treaties/a-52.html

Collier, G., with E. Quaratiello 1994 Basta! Land and the Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas. Oakland, California: Food First Books. (This is an accessible, non-technical account by an anthropologist, writing with a journalist)

Recommended:


Barraclough, S. 1989 An End to Hunger?

Lernoux, P. 1982 Cry of the People. Penguin (Catholic Action source that includes citations to the Vatican II documents in support of the principles of human rights and human dignity)


8 Food Deprivation and the Rights of Women and Children in South Asia (Special Case Study on Vitamin A in India)

Readings:

Review article by Khare from week 4.

Miller, B. 1997 Social class, gender, and intra-household food allocations to children in South Asia. Social Science and Medicine 44,11:


9 (Land), Water, and Food Rights for Peace and Security in the Middle East (When should negotiators use riparian rights, Helsinki rules, equal water utilization, equitable water utilization, UN human rights or other approaches to allocate water for food security and peace?)

Readings:

Class handouts: Excerpts from World Development Summit documents that provide the water and food framework

Recommended:
The professor will make available a set of documents from UN, Palestinian, and Israeli perspectives for students who would like to pursue this topic further.

10-12 Class Presentations

CONCLUSIONS
Handouts and discussion of current, up-to-date documents from UN, U.S., and NGO sources on right-to-food produced as follow-up to the World Food Summit 5 years later.