

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
SPRING SEMESTER 2018

SYLLABUS

**HUMAN DIGNITY
IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD**

LECTURER: Chloe Schwenke, Ph.D.
Course Number: PLCY 688X Class Room: to be determined
Time: Tuesdays 7:00pm to 9:30pm

INTRODUCTION

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”

~ from the first sentence of Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

What does “human dignity” mean?

Does dignity even matter - is the concept of human dignity significant in terms of national and international development, diplomacy, law, or governance policies and associated institutions? Should it be? Does the way in which we think about (and possibly advocate for) human dignity shape our views on globalization, social justice, human rights (legal and ethical), global poverty reduction, gender equity, community, conflict, diversity, and sustainable development?

The rhetoric of dignity certainly is effusive and abundant, even if almost never well defined (and even if we seldom discuss its opposite – indignity). Perhaps we are cheapening the notion of human dignity – and its effectiveness in public policy – by overusing it in our rhetoric, without really knowing what it means? Without some consensus on a moral and philosophical foundation for dignity, and some more precision in its meaning, is dignity quickly becoming a useless notion? Or, to the contrary, is dignity an urgently needed essential baseline for public policy?

And here in the United States, as we are now well into the Trump Era, is dignity really a cornerstone of how the United States conceives of democracy, globalization, and America’s role in the world? Such questions abound, but to begin to find answers means that we as policy experts must speak

with understanding and authority about the meaning(s) and implications of human dignity.

To achieve this level of understanding, we must be specific. We should start with a review of the leading ways in which human dignity has emerged historically as a concept, and compare this to how it is currently conceived in the United States, in different cultures and countries, and as an integral component of globalization. The questions we ask will need to be incisive, as we unpack the rhetoric from the reality. To be balanced, we also need to consider critiques of human dignity, and ponder the implications for public policy were we to decide that “human dignity” no longer has efficacy, i.e. what would be lost if the concept of dignity is discredited, abandoned, ignored, or replaced?

This is a graduate level course designed to develop within students the fundamental reflective and discernment skills and sensibilities to be aware of and responsive to human dignity as a foundational concept (or set of principles) at the heart of the normative content of public policy. The course will include comparisons with other fundamental ethical principles that shape public policy: globalization (and cosmopolitanism), human rights, gender equity, social justice, human capabilities and agency, and human flourishing.

During this course, we will consider together such questions as:

- To what extent is the recognition and respect of human dignity considered to be universal and applicable to – and enforceable upon – all countries, and individual citizens?
- Where, if at all, does human dignity fit in, as the structure, policies, institutions, and expectations of globalization move progressively towards concepts derived exclusively from political economy analysis, and from viewing the world more and more only from the lens of economics and the market?
- Would our societies, and our commitments to democratic principles survive in the absence of a commitment to human dignity? Is the current political reality in the United States a threat to the core commitment to human dignity?
- To what extent are global efforts for gender equity, social inclusion, and the prevention of gender based violence dependent on universal values associated with human dignity?
- In what ways is dignity better conceived as a status rather than as a kind of value? Is dignity always “embodied”? Does it only apply to human beings?
- Is human dignity an “existential” value that pertains to the identity of a person as a human being as measured through their actions, or perhaps as a “virtue” that can be discerned in their character?
- Does each of us have a direct and personal stake in how these questions about human dignity are answered, and an obligation to find such answers?

The course will have three main components:

- **The evolution of human dignity as a concept and a principle:** Students will explore the origins and evolving interpretations of “human dignity” with appropriate references to Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, but also several other sources from Cicero to Nussbaum. This exploration, and the remainder of the course, will be framed primarily but not exclusively from the perspectives of critical social justice, gender equality/equity, conflict, and globalization considerations. And while the concentration will center on the secular, we’ll give some attention to the realization that most Jewish, Muslim, and Christian thinking about human value places much more emphasis on the concept of the sanctity of human life rather than on human dignity – and what this applies for the secular world.

We will reflect on human dignity in the sense that it refers to status, rank, nobility, or honor, and whether someone “of dignity” has a different standing under the law. Then we’ll consider the alternative and more abstract view, with appropriate reference to the thinking of Immanuel Kant, who saw human dignity more as an abstract yet very important philosophical concept – which in time became one of the strongest foundations for human rights. We will also consider whether there is a place in secular public policy (post Enlightenment) for the related concept of “sanctity” – either linked to or as a substitute for “human dignity”. Finally, we will consider the implications for the ideal of human dignity in the era of President Donald Trump.

- **Harnessing “human dignity” as a practical principle:** The second part of the course will involve a hard-nosed evaluation of “human dignity”. Is this simply an abstraction of little efficacy to the crafting of effective public policy, or is this instead of deep significance? Can we measure policy results in the context of dignity indicators, processes, and outcomes? Do we need to think of human dignity possibly in a gritty way, reflecting the way we live our lives – passions, blemishes, prejudices, aspirations, virtues, vices, and all? How “human” can our dignity be? How global can our dignity ideals be? We’ll also learn to be picky consumers of dignity; after all, notions of dignity that aren’t carefully interrogated can quickly come to be interpreted as self-aggrandizement, self-indulgence, or the justifiable manipulation of those of “lesser dignity”, especially in a city like Washington, D.C. where political rank really seems to matter and where political power has just taken a monumental shift. And while it is complicated enough to establish a desirable concept of human dignity that can inform normal political, economic, and policy discourse, what happens when we take the “human” away for “dignity”? Do the interests of human beings stand above, or in deep connection to, the dignity of other life forms on Earth? Who really owns “dignity”, and why?
- **Human dignity in public policy:** The third and final part of the course will concentrate on the persuasive application of defensible notions of human dignity, and how to be incisive in challenging the superficial use of this concept. Through topical case studies and class debate on issues (both global and domestic), we will do our best to gain some traction in the optimal uses of human dignity in the policy context. We’ll weigh some of the arguments of leading thinkers who contend that dignity is something that is owed to a person, and we’ll discuss to what society’s obligations might consist of in this regard. For example, when a person is assaulted by thugs his or her dignity is compromised; we express outrage and we

demand justice. But when homophobic persons humiliate a lesbian we may feel indignant on her behalf, and wish that those who are verbally abusing her were more inclusive and respectful, but we are not quite sure if society has any formal obligation to protect her dignity. How do we “measure” the damage done by humiliation and other forms of maligning the dignity of another? We do recognize that to injure or even to try to efface someone’s dignity is to treat that person as not fully human – as an object or some kind of subhuman creature – but what should public policy do to prevent or punish such attacks on an individual’s dignity?

One or more guest speakers may join in such discussions, as schedules permit. Class time will be divided among lectures, discussions, and student presentations.

Upon successful completion of the course, students with a wide variety of specific sectoral interests should be able to:

- Articulate a persuasive view of the role of human dignity in both a domestic (U.S.) and a global context, and offer arguments for and against the notion of human dignity as it ought (or ought not) to apply to public policies, globalization, and to citizens of all genders.
- Contextualize specific moral challenges to human dignity, and suggest approaches to address these.
- Understand and articulate many dimensions of human dignity, human well-being, human flourishing, and gender equality.
- Articulate both the justifications for human dignity as a universal concept and guiding principle, as well the relative differences and assumptions between Western and non-Western moral thinking about human dignity.
- Frame policy analysis, outputs, and outcomes in terms of human dignity factors.

Course Schedule:

Date	Details
Wed Jan 24, 2018	First Day of UMD Classes 12am
Tue Jan 30, 2018	Week One class 8pm to 9:30pm (note – only this class starts at 8pm)
Tue Feb 20, 2018	Short (8 page) term paper on human dignity due by 7pm
Tue Mar 6, 2018	Mid-term Examination Starts at 7pm
Sun Mar 18, 2018	Spring Break Begins 12am
Sun Mar 25, 2018	Spring Break Ends - Classes Resume 12am

Date	Details
Tue Apr 24, 2018	All podcasts to be submitted by 7pm
Tue May 8, 2018	Final examination Starts at 7pm

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

There will be one short paper required early in the course, a mid-term examination, a presentation, and a final examination. Students will also be expected to lead one class discussion, as described below.

- ❑ **Assignment One:** Due February 20th. Prepare and submit an 8-page (+ references) scholarly paper (1.5-line spacing) with proper citations (Chicago Manual of Style or American Psychological Association style) addressing one significant historical aspect or conception of human dignity that you assert remains relevant to contemporary public policy (in the United States, another country, or globally), but which you think has a high probability of being impacted (for better or for worse) by the problem of growing economic inequality. Describe that probable impact, and what it might signify, specifically from a moral and ethical perspective. (15% of grade)
- ❑ **Exam:** There will be a sixty-minute closed book mid-term examination on March 6th (20% of grade), and a ninety-minute closed book final examination tentatively scheduled for May 8th (25% of grade).
- ❑ **Assignment Two – Podcast:** Due for digital submission on April 24th, although each podcast will be played in class and the creator will host 15 minutes of Q&A afterwards. Each student will prepare a professional quality podcast presentation of not more than 15 minutes per student, pertaining to a leading issue (and associated desired outcome) in human dignity and globalization, to be selected from a list of issues + outcomes to be provided by the professor or as proposed by the student (with professor's approval). The podcast will be used by each student to make a persuasive verbal argument in favor of a specific policy direction or outcome by relying on a moral argument(s) based upon human dignity thinking and principles, while anticipating and addressing the most likely counter-arguments. Further details will be provided later. The professor will evaluate each podcast presentation on the basis of its moral content, on the effectiveness of its presentation, and on its persuasiveness (20% of grade).
- ❑ **Lead one class discussion:** Identify (and submit in advance to professor for her review and approval) an article, blog, or short essay that is relevant to the topic of human dignity and globalization, and is on a topic of particular interest to the student. Once approved, and a

date is selected for the student to lead a 15-minute class discussion on this article, the professor will circulate this article or blog to all the class in advance of the scheduled date. The professor will also provide some suggestions in advance to the student of what the discussion might emphasize. (10% of grade).

Class attendance and participation are extremely important. Students will be expected to complete the readings and come to class prepared to discuss them. Since the class does not follow a text consistently, students can only keep up through regular attendance. Constructive and thoughtful participation in classroom discussions is highly valued (10% of grade).

CLASS SCHEDULE

PART ONE OF THREE: evolution of human dignity as a concept and a principle

30 January 2018 ~ **Week 1: Introduction** (*note: this class will begin one hour late, at 8pm*)

Student and faculty introductions, review of the syllabus and course requirements, and a course overview of the modern prevalence, ambiguity, persuasiveness, and “problem” of (1) human dignity, of (2) dignity without the “human”, and of (3) indignity. Also, a brief interactive class discussion of the framing lens of globalization.

Reading Assignments for Week Two:

- Dignity: Its History and Meaning, by Michael Rosen, Chapter 1, pages 1 - 62
- “In Search of Dignity”, by David Brooks, New York Times, July 6, 2009
http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/07/opinion/07brooks.html?_r=0
- “In Times of Globalization and Human Rights: Does Humiliation Become the Most Disruptive Force?”, by Evelin Gerda Lindner (see files posted on ELMS)
- “Indignation and Outrage – Precious and Necessary”, blog by Dr. Schwenke, at
<http://chloemaryland.net/indignation-and-outrage-precious-and-necessary/#more-864>

6 February 2018 ~ **Week 2: The roots of dignity - 1**

Is human dignity “humbug”? This class will be an overview of contending and evolving historical concepts of dignity, both religious and secular. A review of Cicero’s, Kant’s, Aquinas’, and Nietzsche’s concepts of dignity, and some consideration of the relationship of dignity to equality, grace, hierarchy, and human rights.

Reading Assignments for Week Three:

- Human Dignity, by George Kateb, Preface and Chapter 1, part of Chapter 3; Pages ix – xiii, 1 – 27, 160 – 173
- “Introduction” to Mary Wollstonecraft’s book, The Rights of Women” (see file posted on ELMS)

13 February 2018 ~ **Week 3: The roots of dignity - 2**

This class will discuss the dignity and equality of individuals, compared to perceptions (and systems) of gravitas, rank, and status, and compared to dignity in the context of the species. Is dignity owned by the elite, is it universal, or is dignity an expanding and embracing circle? How does Kateb defend human dignity? In what ways can human dignity be considered foundational to human rights?

Reading Assignments for Week Four:

- Embodied Self-Respect and the Fragility of Human Dignity: A Human Rights Approach”, by Arnd Pollmann, Chapter 17 in Humiliation, Degradation, Dehumanization - Human Dignity Violated, edited by Paulus Kaufmann, Hannes Kuch, Christian Neuhäuser, and Elaine Webster; Pages 243 – 261; Springer Dordrecht: Heidelberg, 2010
<http://www.corteidh.or.cr/tablas/r30885.pdf>

20 February 2018 ~ **Week 4: Diverse ethical views of dignity**

* First assignment due

Is human dignity an “inalienable value” that we cannot lose? Or is it instead an essential – if precarious – capability for basic human flourishing? What does it mean for human dignity to be “embodied”, and what is the relationship between human dignity and self-respect? And how does all of this relate to corresponding human rights? The class will discuss dignity as an explicit reason or “purpose” at the center of living a life in embodied self-respect, and whether human dignity is a desirable outcome of human rights or, to the contrary, whether human rights is an outcome of the failings of human dignity.

Reading Assignments for Week Five:

- Human Dignity, by George Kateb
Chapter 2, Pages 28 - 112

PART TWO OF THREE: Harnessing “human dignity” as a practical principle

27 February 2018 ~ **Week 5: Defending human dignity**

What does it mean to be defending the concept of dignity, and why is it important to do this persuasively and well? What is the relationship between individual personal status and universal human rights? Where does the notion of autonomy come into the discourse on human dignity? The class will also discuss – in the context of human dignity – morality and relativism, and personal and public morality.

Reading Assignments for Week Six:

- Human Dignity, by George Kateb
Part of Chapter 4, Pages 174 – 205
- “Human Dignity and Human Capabilities in Martha C. Nussbaum”, by Paola Bernardini

**6 March 2018 ~ Week 6: Mid-Term Examination during First Hour
Second Hour: Dignity, justice, migration, and health**

After the mid-term, a brief interactive class discussion on social inequality, the relationship between equality of dignity and disparities in human achievement, the demands of justice, environmental stewardship and the dignity of nature (is there non-human dignity?). How, if at all, does dignity influence major challenges of conflict, migration, and health care? Can animals be deemed to have dignity (as asserted by Nussbaum)?

Reading and Video Assignments for Week Seven:

- Declare Dignity: Donna Hicks at TEDxStormont (19 minutes)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPF7QspiLqM>
- “Human Dignity in Healthcare: A Virtue Ethics Approach”, by David Albert Jones, *The New Bioethics - A Multidisciplinary Journal of Biotechnology and the Body*, Volume 21, 2015 - Issue 1
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1179/2050287715Z.00000000059>

PART THREE OF THREE: Human dignity in public policy

13 March 2018 ~ Week 7: Dignity, innovation, and globalization

In terms of human action and behavior, what does it mean to “be” dignified? Can we judge other people by their dignity? To what extent can dignity serve as a useful global policy standard for addressing and resolving major suffering around the world, e.g. from conditions of conflict, migration, poverty, and inequality? Is the concept of dignity relevant to global norms based on economics? What about dignity (and sanctity) when it all gets personal – how healthcare is provided, and when it comes to the exploitation of the human body in the name of science – and of

profit?

Reading Assignments for Week Eight (March 27th):

- “Rape: Does International Human Rights Law Adequately Protect the Dignity of Women?” by Ivana Radacic, Chapter 9 in Humiliation, Degradation, Dehumanization - Human Dignity Violated, Pages 119 – 132
Springer Dordrecht: Heidelberg, 2010
<http://www.corteidh.or.cr/tablas/r30885.pdf>
- “Dehumanization: Perceiving the Body as (In)Human”, by Sophie Oliver, Chapter 7 in Humiliation, Degradation, Dehumanization - Human Dignity Violated, Pages 85 – 97
<http://www.corteidh.or.cr/tablas/r30885.pdf>

20 March 2018 ~ No Class, Spring Break

27 March 2018 ~ Week 8: Embodied dignity...and the indignity of dehumanization

In terms of human dignity, what does it mean to be “dehumanized”? In the case of an atrocity, what impact does the resulting loss of humanity have on victims, perpetrators and bystanders? Rape and sexual assault have long been considered profound indignities, and more recently have become framed as a violation of human rights. But does international law adequately protect the human dignity of victims of gender based violence? What moral duties do states bear to protect all who are vulnerable to GBV, child brides, or human trafficking? What about marital rape, and of private and public standards of dignity? Ultimately, for someone who has suffered rape or any other atrocity, is human dignity a superficial and poignantly hollow concept?

Reading Assignments for Week Nine:

- “Absolute Poverty: Human Dignity, Self-Respect, and Dependency”, by Peter Schaber, Chapter 11 in Humiliation, Degradation, Dehumanization - Human Dignity Violated, Pages 151 – 158
<http://www.corteidh.or.cr/tablas/r30885.pdf>
- “Relative Poverty On a Social Dimension of Dignity”, by Julia Müller and Christian Neuhäuser, Chapter 12 in Humiliation, Degradation, Dehumanization - Human Dignity Violated, Pages 159 – 172
<http://www.corteidh.or.cr/tablas/r30885.pdf>
- “Dignity and Indignity” by Nicholas Tarling, chapter 13 in Perspectives on Human Dignity: A Conversation; J. Malpus and Norelle Lickiss, eds. Springer publishers 2007
(see file posted on ELMS)

“Dignity in Western Versus in Chinese Cultures: Theoretical Overview and Practical Illustrations,” by Daryl Koehn and Alicia Leung, *Business and Society Review* 113:4, Wiley Periodicals, Inc.,
(see file posted on ELMS)

3 April 2018 ~ Week 9: Wealth, poverty, and dignity

Is it undignified to be poor? Is it undignified to be in a dependency relationship with wealthier others, or to be socially and economically vulnerable compared to others? What about your dignity if you are not actually “impoverished” or poor in any absolute sense, but instead live in a society (or a world) with vast extremes in incomes and wealth? Many people in the world are very poor compared to people living in much more affluent societies, and many people struggle to find adequate daily nutrition while more affluent people lavish expensive food and frivolous toys on their dogs and cats. Is the rich person’s fat cat enjoying more dignity than the hungry child of a poor worker in a sweatshop?

Reading Assignment for Week Ten:

- “International Migration, Human Dignity, and the Challenge of Sovereignty”, by the Center for Migration Studies, October 26, 2015 <http://cmsny.org/kerwin-migrationdignitysovereignty/>
- Additional reading(s) to be identified.

10 April 2018 ~ Week 10: Dignity, sovereignty, conflict, and international migration

Does the concept of national sovereignty have implications for human dignity? Is sovereignty only about national security and providing the conditions that allow a country’s citizens to thrive? Properly understood, sovereignty serves human dignity and rights... but is this sense of sovereignty ever “properly understood”?

Reading Assignments for Week Eleven: to be determined (by visiting speaker)

17 April 2018 ~ Week 11: Guest speaker on globalization and human dignity (specific topic and speaker to be identified)

24 April 2018 ~ Week 12: Student podcast presentations and discussions

1 May 2018 ~ Week 13: Student podcast presentations and discussions, and final exam review

8 May 2018 ~ Week 14: Final Examination: to be confirmed

READINGS

Primary readings will include the following complete books or e-books (purchase recommended for the two books):

- *Dignity: Its History and Meaning*, by Michael Rosen, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA., 2012
- *Human Dignity*, by George Kateb, Belknap Press; 1st edition, 2011
- Humiliation, Degradation, Dehumanization - Human Dignity Violated, Springer Dordrecht: Heidelberg, 2010 <http://www.corteidh.or.cr/tablas/r30885.pdf>

Additional readings and videos will include a few selections from the following (available free on line) and other articles posted as PDFs on ELMS:

- “International Migration, Human Dignity, and the Challenge of Sovereignty”, by the Center for Migration Studies, October 26, 2015 <http://cmsny.org/kerwin-migrationdignitysovereignty/>
- Declare Dignity: Donna Hicks at TEDxStormont (19 minutes) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPF7QspiLqM>
- “Human Dignity in Healthcare: A Virtue Ethics Approach”, by David Albert Jones, The New Bioethics - A Multidisciplinary Journal of Biotechnology and the Body , Volume 21, 2015 - Issue 1 <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1179/2050287715Z.00000000059>

OFFICE HOURS AND FACULTY BIO

Students may schedule time by calling or emailing the lecturer, so as to understand issues more fully or to discuss their work. Typically, such meetings are held directly before the class. Dr. Chloe Schwenke's cell phone is 301-448-2953, and her personal email is chloemaryland@gmail.com.

Dr. Schwenke is an educator, researcher, international development practitioner, and human rights activist with extensive experience in academia, government, non-profit, and for-profit organizations. In her work, she draws on her extensive international and multicultural experience in gender equality and women's empowerment, social inclusion, diversity and leadership training, results-based human rights programming, LGBTQ issues, democracy / human rights / governance (DRG) analysis and issues, and development ethics. Prior to her current employment as Director of the Global Program on Violence, Rights and Inclusion at the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), she served as vice president at Freedom House, as a senior human rights expert (political appointment under President Obama) at USAID, managing director at a South African



country office of a multinational development institution (Siyakhana), and co-founder and managing director of a US-registered development firm with offices in four African countries. In a career of over three decades covering project experience in over 42 countries, her experience includes one year as a Fulbright professor teaching ethics, gender equity, and human rights to graduate students in Uganda, and nearly 15 years of residency and employment divided between Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, and the Philippines. Chloe is also an accomplished public speaker, including two significant speaking engagements at the Obama White House, one at Camp David, and a TED Talk.

Chloe Schwenke's programmatic work, scholarship, research, and many publications as a researcher, ethicist, public policy expert, human rights advocate, blogger, and as a development practitioner are informed by key ethical concepts arising out of feminist ethics, the capability approach, research in social inclusion and social norms, and human rights moral concepts – all tempered by the challenges of keeping international development grounded in an ethically explicit and justifiable framework - with a focus on achieving pragmatic, measurable results on the ground.

Dr. Schwenke received her Ph.D. in public policy at the School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland at College Park, where she was chosen as Alumna of the Year for 2013. In that same year she was also awarded a National Public Service Award by the National Center for Transgender Equality, and in 2016 she was awarded the Global Advocate Award by DC Center – Global. She is the author of *Reclaiming Values in International Development* (Praeger 2008), and her memoir will be published by Red Hen Press in May of 2018.