

APPLICATION PROJECT 3

The purpose of the assessment was both summative and formative: it tests students' knowledge of religious traditions while developing skills in research, presentation, and discussion/debate.

Basics: Students had to form groups representing particular religious traditions and present what they understood to be their traditions' "ideal" Universal Declaration of Human Rights, then come up with a revised based on Universal Declaration of Human Rights discussion between the groups in class. This was the final assignment and we did it in class, during the final 3 days of the course, although students also did some work outside of class to prepare for their presentations.

The rubric at the end is for the group presentations that students do prior to the inter-group discussion. It's a relatively simple rubric, indicating the questions I will ask while observing/grading presentations.

RELG 2559 Group Projects: August 5 Lesson Plan

- Assignment: rewrite the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for the contemporary world
- We'll consider ourselves to be a new Philosophers' Committee, trying to get at the basic ethical commitments of a number of the world's communities and traditions
- 4 teams of 3 members each
 - Jewish thought
 - Muslim thought
 - Christian thought
 - "Secular liberal" thought – contemporary proponents of human rights from a nonreligious perspective, with some focus/priority on individual freedom, autonomy, the importance of self-rule, democracy, and civil/political participation in general
- Your team does not have to represent a particular group or nation, and you don't really even have to assume that you're a member of the tradition you're representing, but you

do need to get into the mindset of the tradition and explain its commitments and positions fairly and clearly

- Teams may use sources outside the course texts; this includes the Scriptures of the different traditions, but you may research your tradition online as well (instructor will help as needed)
- Note: for now, NO reading the UDHR itself!

- 30-45 min: starting with the course texts, decide what your tradition's most basic ethical commitments are, and make a list of which rights you think arise out of those commitments
 - Use all the course texts and remember the diversity of ideas within the tradition; make sure you include at least one idea from every text/thinker, within reason
 - No more than 15 distinct rights
 - Try to strike a balance between very broad and vague declarations of rights and very specific—not just “no one should be poor” but also not just “everyone should have three meals a day”
 - There are lots of online resources: your team can use articles from the library, research reputable internet sites that give an overview of the tradition's commitments (but try to use scholarly sources for direct citations or specific ethical commands/attitudes), look at Scriptural texts, etc.
- 1 hour: prepare a 10-minute presentation (up to 12 min is OK) to show to your colleagues, explaining your list of rights for the “new” UDHR and the reasoning behind the rights you include; presentations will be tomorrow
 - Include specific list of rights as well as the justification for why those rights (and only those rights) should be included
 - Use slides or visual presentation software of some kind
 - All members of the group must participate in (i.e., talk during) the presentation
 - You may include reasoning that you think all your colleagues will understand, but also reasoning that's more unique to your tradition, and you can decide how much to “translate” your reasoning into concepts that all people will understand or when to stick with concepts unique to your tradition

- Take-home assignment - write 600 words or less on these points (address them all):
 - State and describe one thing (fact, ethical mandate, philosophical or theological concept) that you learned about your tradition through this research, that you hadn't learned in the class already
 - Describe one difficulty you had either getting your head around something in the tradition, or in figuring out how to present the tradition's teachings to a diverse group
 - Examine your experience of working in a group on this: has it helped you to learn more? Were there differences in the way people interpreted texts or the way they wanted to present things (or in the priority they placed on different commitments)? How did you work through differences?

Please note that the take-home assignment asks for a personal reflection, not an argument, so you don't need to worry about constructing a thesis statement and a consistent theme/argument. However, you will be graded for clarity of your thoughts and writing. So, work on making yourself clear and really thinking through the issues—try to be as specific as possible about your questions and analysis within the word limits. Also, because this is a personal reflection, you won't be judged on content, unless something is factually incorrect.

Rubric for Group Presentations on August 6 and 7

The following criteria will be taken into consideration when grading the group presentations, which are worth 10% of the course grade. All the criteria will be given equal weight.

Content

- Does the presentation clearly explain the fundamental concepts/beliefs/doctrines of the tradition?
- Does it clearly explain the most important ethical concerns of the tradition?
- Does it show how those ethical (and theological) concerns do or do not support "rights language" in general, and then what sorts of rights the tradition supports, if any?
- Does it give a list of rights to be included in the UDHR, not too long or too short, and explain why each of these rights is in the "most important" list?
- Does it begin to indicate where the advocates of the tradition will be willing to dialogue with others, possibly compromise with others, and on which points they intend to stick firmly to their position?

Style

- Is the presentation written clearly, so all the points are comprehensible to the audience?
- Is it spoken clearly – slowly enough, with verbal explanations of difficult points, etc.?
- Did all students participate relatively equally in the presentation?
- Are the slides/visual aids useful for audience understanding and complementary to the presentation? That is, do they enhance the verbal presentation, rather than simply repeating its points or detracting from it?
- Where pictures or video are used (they don't have to be), are they well-integrated with the presentation? Photos/video can help emphasize a point, but again, they need to be complementary to the presentation