



International Journalism and Human Rights Symposium

Graduate Student Presentation Abstracts

Mekala Conway

The Exceptional First Amendment and the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Founding Founders of the United States viewed the new American republic as “exceptional.” American exceptionalism is the view that the United States is constitutionally different from the rest of the world to the point that it is simultaneously an international leader and “outlier” in matters of human rights, specifically in the area of freedom of speech and expression. The First Amendment is the clearest demonstration of American exceptionalism. It forbids Congress—federal state and local governments and governmental agencies, state colleges and universities, as well as school boards—from infringing on the free exercise of religion, establishing a state religion, and abridging free speech, free press, free association, or the right to petition the government for a redress of grievances. This presentation discusses the First Amendment, its exceptional qualities, its purpose and cultural significance, as well as its influence on the post-World War II United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt showcases the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

Carolina Perez

Resisting Authoritarian Internet Censorship in Cuba: The Case of Yaoni Sanchez

According to Freedom House, Cuba has one of the world's most oppressive media and Internet censorship regimes in the world. The government control all the media and the information and communication technology infrastructures in the country. This firm hand on the media and telecommunications is a tried-and-true protocol of governance in place since the country's Marxist-Leninist revolution of 1959. The aim of this study is to investigate the Internet rights and affordances currently available to the people of Cuba, with a focus on the governance of the Internet. The study, which was carried out within the framework of human rights theory, explores how the country's troubled history, struggles with political transitions, and an adversarial, ideological relationship with the United States factored into forming the country's authoritarian regime. The study also explores the ways that the Cuban people resist cyber authoritarianism through formation of their own black-market Internet. The focus is on dissident Cuban journalist and activist, Yoani Sanchez, whose actions have enabled the censored and muted voices of Cuban dissidents and intellectuals to be heard around the world despite governmental repression and the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Hamid Amini

Woman, Life, Freedom: The Struggle for Human Rights in Iran

After the Iranian Revolution of 1978, the country underwent a period of significant change characterized by widespread suppression aimed at promoting unity. The main slogan at the time was "Neither East nor West, Islamic Republic," and any expression of eastern or western cultural ideals was strongly discouraged. This period also saw significant restrictions on women's rights, as they were confined to traditional Islamic norms. The eight-year Iran-Iraq War provided an opportunity for the government to manipulate religious sentiments to mobilize public support for the conflict. The war had a significant impact on the economy, causing increased expenses and high levels of unemployment due to sanctions and the general economic downturn. Over time, public dissatisfaction with gender and religious apartheid, as well as the struggling economy, increased. However, due to fear of the regime's previous violent response and the absence of strong opposition leaders, the dissent has not been widespread and impactful. The regime's inability to meet the people's needs and the suppression of expression have led to the compression of public anger. The current "Woman, Life, Freedom" revolution represents the most recent explosion of this pent-up anger and represents a major challenge to the current regime."

Saleha Sodat

Taliban Regime Erasure of Female Journalists in Afghanistan.

Media freedom, freedom of speech, and the participation of women in the media and other professions were the most important achievements of the last two decades in

Afghanistan. With the re-establishment of the Taliban regime in 2021, these freedoms are on the verge of collapse. The Taliban's Intelligence and the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice have severely restricted the freedom of journalists and of the media. The number of female journalists in the country has been reduced by 99%. After consolidating power, the Taliban imposed regulations and guidelines outside the law on the media. They defined "Islamic Sharia" as the framework for regulating the activities of the media and of journalists. Nevertheless, no specific legal explanation and interpretation of "Sharia" has been presented. For this reason, the media and journalists work in a legal vacuum. The Taliban uses this vacuum to suppress, erase women journalists, arrest, torture, threaten, and even confiscate the work equipment of journalists and place restrictions on them. Reporters Without Borders reports that the first year after the Taliban took over in Afghanistan, three out of four journalists lost their jobs. Female journalists were the first victims of the Taliban regime. In 11 of the 34 provinces of Afghanistan, no female journalists exist. Out of a total of 2,756 female journalists and media workers in the profession before the Taliban came to power, only a handful are still working under frightful conditions in a small number of media outlets in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. This presentation explores the dismal state of freedom of speech and of the press under the Taliban regime, with a focus on female journalists. In addition to being denied the right to work and study, Afghan women and girls do not even have the right to leave their houses without a male guardian. The anti-feminist policies of the Taliban have not only affected the presence of working women in the community but also reduced them to poverty.

Fabiola Carrión

Social Media as Alternative Source of Counter Information on Police Brutality in Latin America: The Case of Chile, Peru, and Colombia

In the last few years, many countries in Latin America mobilized against their governments and demanded change in their current situation (economic and social inequalities, political irregularities, etc), many of the governments responded with police brutality as an attempt to silence them, and society complained the silence or biased coverage of the traditional media during those events. The study aims to understand the usage of social media as an alternative channel to share information about police brutality during mobilizations. This paper will focus on the Chilean social outburst (2019), the Peruvian mobilizations against Manuel Merino (2020), and the Colombian national strike (2021). For the analysis, there will be a comparison of news reported by online independent media and news reported by traditional media during those political crises.

Md Ashraful Goni

Hate speech as a tool of oppression against homosexuals: A study on Bangladeshi Islamic Preacher's YouTube Videos

Bangladesh is a Muslim majority nation where homosexuality is a crime. In Bangladesh, Islamic preachers are very influential, and they have the power to dominate people with their speech and opinions. This study seeks to investigate hate speech against the homosexual population by Islamic preachers in order to understand the construction of homosexuality in Bangladesh. Using Orbe's co-cultural communication theory, this study explains how the law and religion suppress the homosexual community in Bangladesh.

Mahedi Hasan

Associated Press Erasure of Ugandan Climate Activist, Venessa Nakate: A Textual and Visual Analysis

In 2019, Ugandan business graduate, Venessa Nakate, became a climate activist. She started standing along busy roads holding placards, hoping that government officials would notice and take necessary action to mitigate climate change and environmental degradation in Uganda. Her solitary protests continued for more than six months before getting anyone's attraction. In 2020 she got an invitation to join renowned female climate activists from around at the 2020 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. This group included Greta Thunberg of Sweden. American news agency the Associated Press, published a group photo of the young climate activists but Venessa Nakate, the only black person in the group, was cropped. Nakate took to social media and accused the AP of "racism." After massive criticism from around the world, the AP published the original image containing Nakate and apologized to her. This paper is a visual and textual analysis of the AP's erasure of Nakate and the controversy that ensued. The analysis was carried out within the framework of the muted group theory, which holds that certain groups are muted in political debates. The presentation explored how the AP proceeded to repair the damage the controversy had been done to its reputation.

