

STS.458 Science, Technology, and Human Rights Fall 2021

Instructor

Eden Medina
Program in Science, Technology and Society
E51-180
Office hours: By appointment

Location and Time

T 1pm-4pm E51-275

Description

This graduate seminar draws from literature in history, anthropology, law, and related fields to discuss how science and technology have been mobilized historically in the defense of human rights and to assist the pursuit of truth and justice in the aftermath of state violence. It examines how science and technology have shaped understandings of human rights and the obligations to uphold them, as well as the mobilization of human rights as a framework used to guide the creation and use of new technologies and scientific capabilities. Students will write weekly responses to the readings and a research paper on the topic of their choosing.

Objectives

By the completion of the course students will:

- 1) Discuss readings on topics such as the history of human rights, the relationship of science and technology to the pursuit of truth and justice in the aftermath of human rights violations, and how human rights can provide a legal and conceptual frame for thinking about technological use and scientific capability.
- 2) Understand how science and technology have historically contributed to processes of truth, justice, and repair and practices of fact-finding and advocacy.
- 3) Consider the different methodologies used by scholars working in this area.
- 4) Gain familiarity with new and emerging areas of inquiry by attending a conference on the course topic.
- 5) Write an original research paper on a topic of their interest that ties to course themes.

Books:

These books are available at the MIT Library, some in electronic form. They are also available for purchase. Additional readings are posted to the course website on Canvas.

Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2010).

Kirsten Weld, *Paper Cadavers: The Archives of Dictatorship in Guatemala* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

Adam Rosenblatt, *Digging for the Disappeared: Forensic Science After Atrocity* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2015)

Sarah Wagner, *To Know Where He Lies: DNA Technology and the Search from Srebrenica's Missing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

Michelle Caswell, *Archiving the Unspeakable: Silence, Memory, and the Photographic Record in Cambodia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), chap 3, 4

Philip Alston and Sarah Knuckey, eds. *The Transformation of Human Rights Fact-Finding* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

Sandra Ristovska, *Seeing Human Rights: Video Activism as a Proxy Profession* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2021).

Andrea Ballester, *A Future History of Water* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).

Grading

Participation (discussion in class + leading class discussion twice)	35%
Weekly response papers	30%
AAAS conference presentation	10%
Final paper	25%

All written assignments (response papers, final paper) should be uploaded to the course site as a pdf or Word doc.

Student Conduct, Rights, and Responsibilities

All students are expected to submit their own original work. For more information on expectations of student conduct, including definitions of plagiarism and strategies for avoiding it in your written work, please refer to the MIT handbook on academic integrity available online at <http://web.mit.edu/academicintegrity/>.

Student Support Services and Disability Access Services

Every attempt will be made to accommodate qualified students with personal or medical issues that may affect the student's ability to attend class and complete assignments. Students requesting this kind of accommodation must contact and receive verification from Student Support Services (S³) in 5-104. Students may also contact S³ at 617-253-4861 or visit their office during virtual walk-in hours Monday-Friday 10am-12pm and 2pm-4pm at [S³ Help Queue](#). Students will be expected to attend class and complete work unless they have verification from Student Support Services. More information is available online at <http://studentlife.mit.edu/s3>. Additional resources for graduate students are available via the Office of Graduate Education and GradSupport <https://oge.mit.edu/development/gradsupport/>.

Every effort will be made to accommodate students with disabilities. Students with disabilities who need accommodation should contact Disability and Access Services (DAS) as soon as possible by visiting their office in 5-104 or at 617-253-1674. Students should also let the instructor know of any approved accommodations as soon as possible so that arrangements can be made in a timely fashion. More information is available online at <http://studentlife.mit.edu/das>.

Class preparation

Students are expected to complete the assigned readings for the week prior to class and come prepared with questions they wish to discuss. All listed readings are required for class unless they are explicitly marked optional. As you read pay attention to the author's argument, use of source materials, and how the work sits in the larger literature. You should also mark passages in the text that you wish to discuss further and jot down questions, insights, or reactions that come to mind as you read. For further advice on how to approach the readings in this class, I recommend Paul Edwards, "How to Read a Book, v5.0" <https://pne.people.si.umich.edu/PDF/howtoread.pdf>.

Participation

Reading is essential for the class, but so is class participation. Class discussions provide a space for you to ask questions, share insights, make connections, and work through the more difficult aspects of the text. Participation contributes to active learning. It also creates a class environment where we can all learn from one another while making the course lively and engaging. In addition to participating in class discussions and posting questions to the course website, *each student will be in charge of leading the class discussion twice over the course of the semester.*

Weekly Responses

Every week, students will be responsible for submitting a short response to the readings. These responses should identify key arguments from the readings assigned for the week and raise questions for further discussion. Responses must be uploaded to the course site using the discussion tab for the week *by 11:59pm on Monday*. Students who are in charge of leading the class should view these responses as a resource that they can use to shape discussion. Students do not need to submit a response the weeks that they lead discussion.

Final paper

Students will write a final 20-page paper on a topic of their choosing. Paper topics must be finalized several weeks before the end of the semester and students should upload their selected topic with a partial bibliography to the course website by 11:59pm on November 8. All students should schedule an appointment to meet with me to discuss their final paper and plan of work. Students should also plan to meet with the Ece Turnator, the MIT Humanities and Digital Scholarship Librarian (see below). *Final papers are due by 11:59pm on the last day of class* and should be uploaded to the course website.

Resources

Ece (pronounced AJ) Turnator is the Humanities and Digital Scholarship Librarian at MIT (turnator@mit.edu | E53-100 | 617.253.4979). Students should contact Dr. Turnator when they begin their final paper research to acquire advice on potential source materials and how to locate them.

Course Outline

Sept 14 Introduction

- At home viewing: Claudia Barril and Sebastián Moreno dir., *Habeas Corpus*, LATINBEAT, 2015, available at: <https://mit.kanopy.com/video/habeas-corpus>

Sept 21 Putting Human Rights in Historical Context

- Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), chapters 2, 5, 6.
- Samuel Moyn, "The Future of Human Rights," *Sur - International Journal on Human Rights* 20 (2014): 57-66.
- Jan Eckel, "The Rebirth of Politics from the Spirit of Morality: Explaining the Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s," in Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn. *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.
- [The Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (UDHR)
- [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR)
- [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (ICESCR)
- Further reading: Samuel Moyn, "Substance, Scale, and Salience: The Recent Historiography of Human Rights." *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 8 (2012): 123-140.
- Further reading: Susan Waltz, "Universalizing Human Rights: The Role of Small States in the Construction of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" *Human Rights Quarterly* 23 (2001): 44-72.
- Further reading: Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights* (New York: Norton, 2007).

Science, Technology, and Understanding the Past

Sept 28 Archives

- Kirsten Weld, *Paper Cadavers: The Archives of Dictatorship in Guatemala* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), introduction, chps 1,2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9
- Oriana Bernasconi, Elizabeth Lira, and Marcela Ruiz, "Political Technologies of Memory: Uses and Appropriations of Artefacts that Register and Denounce State Violence." *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 13, no. 1 (2019): 7-29.
- Guest visit: Oriana Bernasconi, Coordinator of the Memory and Human Rights Interdisciplinary Research Program at the Universidad Alberto Hurtado (Chile).
- Further reading: Louis Bickford. "Human Rights Archives and Research on Historical Memory: Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay." *Latin American Research Review* 35, no. 2 (2000): 160-82.

- Further reading: Oriana Bernasconi, ed. *Resistance to Political Violence in Latin America: Documenting Atrocity* (Springer, 2019).

Oct 5 Forensic Anthropology

- Adam Rosenblatt, *Digging for the Disappeared: Forensic Science After Atrocity* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2015), introduction, chapters 1, 2, and 3
- Robin Reineke, “Necroviolence and Postmortem Care Along the U.S.-Mexico Border,” *The Border and Its Bodies: The Embodiment of Risk Along the US-México Line* (2019).
- Claire Moon, “Interpreters of the Dead: Forensic Knowledge, Human Remains and the Politics of the Past,” *Social and Legal Studies* 22 (2) (2012): 149–169.
- Madeleine Fullard, “Some Trace Remains (An Extract),” *Kronos* 44 (November 2018: 163-180.
- Guest visit: Robin Reineke, Co-founder Colibri Center for Human Rights
- Further reading: Thomas Keenan and Eyal Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull: The Advent of a Forensic Aesthetics* (Berlin: Sternberg Press 2012).
- Further reading: Christopher Joyce and Eric Stover, *Witnesses from the Grave: The Stories Bones Tell* (New York: Random House 1991).
- Further reading: Clea Koff, *The Bone Woman: A Forensic Anthropologist’s Search for Truth in the Mass Graves of Rwanda, Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo*. Random House, 2007.
- Further reading: Claire Moon, “Human rights, Human Remains: Forensic Humanitarianism and the Human Rights of the Dead,” *International Social Science Journal*, 65: 49-63.
- Further viewing: Marc Silver dir., “Who is Dayani Cristal?,” Pulse Films, 2012.

Oct 12 DNA

- Sarah Wagner, *To Know Where He Lies: DNA Technology and the Search from Srebrenica’s Missing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), introduction, chapters 3, 4, 5, 8
- Lindsay Smith, “Genetics Is a Study in Faith: Forensic DNA, Kinship Analysis, and the Ethics of Care in Post-Conflict Latin America.” *S&F Online* 11, no. 3 (2013).
- Alondra Nelson, “The Social Life of DNA: Racial Reconciliation and Institutional Morality after the Genome.” *The British Journal of Sociology* 69, no. 3 (2018): 522-537.
- Vivette García-Deister, “DNA Will Not Solve Mexico’s Unidentified-Body Crisis,” *Slate*, August 1, 2019.
- Further reading: Lori Baker, “Biomolecular Applications.” In *Handbook of Forensic Anthropology and Archaeology*, edited by Douglas Ubelaker and Soren Blau, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016): 418–29.
- Further reading: Amâde M’charek, “Technologies of Population: Forensic DNA Testing Practices and the Making of Differences and Similarities,” *Configurations*, Volume 8, Number 1, Winter 2000, pp. 121-158.
- Further reading: Lindsay Smith, “Identifying Democracy: Citizenship, DNA, and Identity in Postdictatorship Argentina,” *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 41, no. 6 (2016): 1037-1062.

Oct 19 Memory

- Michelle Caswell, *Archiving the Unspeakable: Silence, Memory, and the Photographic record in Cambodia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014).
- Barbie Zelizer, "From the Image of Record to the Image of Memory: Holocaust Photography, Then and Now." in Bonnie Brennen and Hanno Hardt, eds, *Picturing the Past: Media, History, and Photography* (Urbana Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1999): 98-121.
- Guest visit: Michelle Caswell, Associate Professor of Archival Studies in the Department of Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles
- Further reading: Marita Sturken, "Camera Images and National Meanings," *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: California Press 1997), chapter 1.
- Further reading: Benedict Carey, "Can We Really Inherit Trauma," *New York Times*, December 10, 2018 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/10/health/mind-epigenetics-genes.html>
- Further viewing: Patricio Guzman dir., *Nostalgia for the Light*, New York: Icarus Films, 2011.
- Further reading: Katherine Hite and Daniela Jara, "Presenting Unwieldy Pasts," *Memory Studies* 13 (3) (2020): 245-252.

Science, Technology, and Practice

Oct 26 Human Rights and the AAAS

- Attend the [AAAS Science, Technology, and Human Rights Conference 2021](#) (October 21-22). Go to at least three conference panels. Summarize the key issues, questions, challenges for two of them and connect the material presented to course readings. What did you find most interesting about the panel material? Be prepared to present your summaries in class. If you are unable to attend the conference, you should view [videos of the 2020 conference](#) available on YouTube and complete an equivalent assignment.
- Further reading: Robert Katz, "Human Issues in Human Rights: The Experience of the Committee on Human Rights of the National Academy of Sciences," *Science*, August 11, 1978.
- Further Reading: Kari Hannibal, *Taking Up the Challenge: The Promotion of Human Rights* (Washington, D.C.: AAAS Publications 1992).

Nov 2 Human Rights Fact-Finding

- Frédéric Mégret, "Do Facts Exist, Can They Be "Found", and Does it Matter?" in Philip Alston and Sarah Knuckey, eds. *The Transformation of Human Rights Fact-Finding* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 27-48.
- Eyal Weizman, *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability* (New York: Zone Books, 2017), 13-47.
- Nancy Armoury Combs, *Fact-Finding Without Facts: The Uncertain Evidentiary Foundations of International Criminal Convictions* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), chapter 2
- Claire Moon, "What One Sees and How One Files Seeing: Human Rights Reporting, Representation and Action," *Sociology* 46, no. 5 (2012): 876-890.

- Patrick Ball, “The Bigness of Big Data: Samples, Models, and the Facts We Might Find When Looking at Data,” Philip Alston and Sarah Knuckey, eds. *The Transformation of Human Rights Fact-Finding*, (Oxford University Press, 2016), 425-440.
- Further reading: Susan Wolfenbarger, “Remote Sensing as a Tool for Human Rights Fact-Finding” Philip Alston and Sarah Knuckey, eds. *The Transformation of Human Rights Fact-Finding*, (Oxford University Press, 2016), 463-478.
- Further reading: Brian Root, “Numbers are Only Human: Lessons for Human Rights Practitioners from the Quantitative Literacy Movement,” Philip Alston and Sarah Knuckey, eds. *The Transformation of Human Rights Fact-Finding*, (Oxford University Press, 2016), 355-376.
- Further reading: Aryn Martin and Michael Lynch, “Counting Things and People: The Practices of Counting, *Social Problems* 56 (2)(2009): 243-266.
- Further reading: Sally Merry, “Measuring the World: Indicators, Human Rights, Global Governance,” *Current Anthropology*, 52 (3) (2011): S83-S95).

Nov 9 Human Rights Advocacy

- Sandra Ristovska, *Seeing Human Rights: Video Activism as a Proxy Profession* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2021), chapters 2, 4, 5.
- Ella McPherson, “Risk and the Pluralism of Digital Human Rights Fact-Finding and Advocacy,” in Molly Land and Jay Aronson, eds. *New Technologies for Human Rights Law and Practice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 188-214.
- Anonymous Authors, “Femicide & Counterdata Collection: Activist Efforts to Monitor and Challenge Gender-based Violence,” under review, shared with permission from the authors but only for class use. *Do not post or share*.
- Guest visit: Sandra Ristovska, Assistant Professor of Media Studies, University of Colorado, Boulder.
- Further reading: Molly Land and Jay Aronson, eds. *New Technologies for Human Rights Law and Practice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

Nov 16 The Right to Water

- Andrea Ballesterio, *A Future History of Water* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).
- Lea Shaver, “Safeguarding Human Rights from Problematic Technologies,” in Molly Land and Jay Aronson, eds. *New Technologies for Human Rights Law and Practice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
- Guest visit: Andrea Ballesterio, Associate Professor of Anthropology, University of Southern California

Nov 23 The Right to Health

- Amy Kapczynski, “The Right to Medicines in an Age of Neoliberalism.” *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 10, no. 1 (2019): 79-107.
- João Biehl, “The Juridical Hospital: Patient-Citizen-Consumers Claiming the Right to Health in Brazilian Courts.” In *Beyond Imported Magic: Essays on Science, Technology,*

and Society in Latin America edited by Eden Medina, Ivan da Costa Marques, and Christina Holmes. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014, pp. 349-372.

- João Biehl “Pharmaceuticalization: AIDS Treatment and Global Health Politics,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 80 (4) (2007): 1083-1126.
- “A Patent Waiver on COVID Vaccines is Right and Fair,” *Nature* 593, 478 (2021).
- Further reading: Peter Drahos and John Braithwaite, *Information Feudalism*, The New Press (2002).
- Further reading: Peter Yu, “Reconceptualizing Intellectual Property Interests in a Human Rights Framework,” *U.C. Davis Law Review* 40 (2007): 1039-1149.
- Further viewing: Dylan Mohan Gray, dir., *Fire in the Blood*, Sparkwater India, 2013.

Thinking Through the Future of Science and Technology

Nov 30 Human Rights Frameworks for Emerging Technologies

- Enrique Piracés “The Future of Human Rights Technology,” in Molly Land and Jay Aronson, eds. *New Technologies for Human Rights Law and Practice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
- Peter Asaro, “Hands Up: Don’t Shoot: HRI and the Automation of the Police Use of Force,” *Journal of Human Robot Interaction* 5 (3) (2016): 55-69.
- Mark Latonero, "Governing Artificial Intelligence: Upholding Human Rights & Dignity." *Data & Society* (2018): 1-37.
- Jayita Sarkar, “How to Support the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons Without Signing It,” *Lawfare*, February 7, 2021 <https://www.lawfareblog.com/how-support-treaty-prohibition-nuclear-weapons-without-signing-it>
- Peter Asaro, “On Banning Autonomous Weapon Systems: Human Rights, Automation, and the Dehumanization of Lethal Decision-Making,” *International Review of the Red Cross*, Volume 94 Number 886 Summer 2012.

Dec 7 Class Presentation of Final Papers