

Human Rights Education: Soochow University, Taipei

Chang Fo-chuan Center for the Study of Human Rights

BEGINNING IN 1995, several faculty members of the Political Science Department at Soochow University took upon themselves to offer courses in the human rights field, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. They also collaborated with colleagues in Yang-ming Medical College (now the National Yang-ming University) and Taipei Municipal Teacher's College (now the Taipei Municipal University of Education) in training teachers and compiling teaching materials for primary and secondary schools. In 1998, an International Conference on Human Rights Education was held in Taipei, and scholars and experts from the US, Europe and Japan gathered together to discuss the strengthening of human rights education in Taiwan.

The Chang Fo-chuan Center for the Study of Human Rights

The Chang Fo-chuan Center for the Study of Human Rights was founded in 2001, the first human rights research institute in Taiwan. It aims at the promotion of human rights education and the establishment of a human rights culture, notably through:

- Promoting human rights research in Taiwan, integrating humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, as well as practical arts such as public health and social work, in an interdisciplinary approach.
- Advancing human rights education, first by offering courses in international protection of human rights, women's rights, rights of the indigenous peoples, etc. in the Political Science Department, and proceeding to set up the undergraduate human rights program (2004) and MA degree program in human rights (2008).
- Training human rights non-governmental organization (NGO) workers by setting up workshops and seminars. Through the years the Center has cooperated with many human rights NGOs in spon-

soring workshops and summer camps for both human rights workers and university students.

- Contributing to international exchange by holding international conferences in Taipei and encouraging faculty members and students to attend conferences abroad and work with international NGOs.

The Undergraduate Human Rights Program

The Undergraduate Human Rights Program was set up in 2004. It is designed for students from diverse disciplines and backgrounds. The students must complete twenty-four credit hours before they are awarded a certification. They are encouraged to take part in internships working with human rights NGOs. The program is interdisciplinary, emphasizing the integration of theory and practice. The core courses are human rights philosophy, the history of human rights thought, and international human rights law. The elective courses include art and literature, social sciences, law and policy, as well as environmental studies and public health. The faculty is drawn from Soochow University, National Taiwan University, Fu Jen University, Yang Ming University, Taipei Municipal University of Education and Academia Sinica, as well as practicing human rights lawyers and NGO leaders. So far more than two hundred students have participated in this program, and over fifty some have earned their certificate. Many of our students went on to work for the NGOs, after their graduation from the university.

MA Degree in Human Rights

Based on the experiences of Chang Fo-chuan Center for the Study of Human Rights and the undergraduate Human Rights Program, the MA degree program in Human Rights was set up in 2008, aiming at the further promotion of human rights education and practical training for government officials and NGO workers. It is the first and only MA degree program in this field in Taiwan. The basic idea of the program is similar to that of the undergraduate human rights program, emphasizing the integration of theory and practice, incorporating both civil and political rights on the one hand and economic and social rights on the other. Well-known courses include human rights philosophy, the right to health and the protection of environment, etc. It is

mandated that students must complete twenty-four credit hours of courses, including three credit hours in internship and the submission of a MA thesis.

The students come from many universities and colleges in Taiwan, with diverse backgrounds and training, including students in arts and theater, law, environment, and journalism. At this time, there are about thirty students in the program, and five students have graduated from the program.

Human Rights Journal: Taiwan Human Rights Journal

After over a year of discussion and debate, the Chang Fo-chuan Center for the Study of Human Rights at Soochow University, Taipei has decided to launch a human rights journal. Since the mid-1980s, Taiwan has witnessed a process of democratization. Civil society has been rejuvenated, and NGOs, including human rights organizations, have become more robust. More and more scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds, such as law, sociology, philosophy, politics, public health and anthropology, etc, have begun to engage in research and teaching in the field of human rights. Plainly, human rights research and pedagogy has emerged as a new academic discipline in Taiwan. However, there is as yet no academic journal for human rights studies. Our journal is designed to fill this gap.

We envision a journal of the highest standard; balancing theoretical and practical perspectives; drawing upon different disciplines, including law, sociology, philosophy, politics, public health and anthropology, etc; and addressing concrete issues confronting society. Generally speaking, every issue will have a special feature consisting of a cluster of three or four articles. For example, the inaugural issue will feature three articles dealing with different aspects of Taiwan's implementation of the International Bill of Rights (the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights). There will also be research notes, notes from the field, and book review essays.

Although the Journal is published and managed by the Chang Fo-chuan Center for the Study of Human Rights, it rightly belongs to the academic community and human rights NGOs in Taiwan as a whole. It is our sincere wish that in due time it will become a valuable shared resource for the Chinese-speaking communities in different parts of the world.

Human Rights Dictionary¹

The idea of a glossary that compared the Taiwan human rights record against international standards would be useful for promoting the understanding of human rights in Taiwan was first proposed in 2003. The dictionary subsequently evolved over a period of several years. It soon became clear, however, that for our purposes a broader reach of human rights concepts, events, phenomena, and laws needed to be included, and so we set out to create a far more elaborate volume. It was later decided to include sections on Mainland China and Hong Kong in the volume so that it would be useful to the entire Chinese-speaking community and for international scholars of comparative human rights. These two sections were written in 2006. This dictionary is thus comprised of four parts. The large international section is a compendium of universal human rights principles, laws, methods, institutions, and issues. This is followed by the three area sections, in which these jurisdictions are analyzed in terms of the standards or benchmarks in “International section.”

The reader will quickly notice that each section has its own character. This reflects in part the different origins of the various sections, and also the different situations in the three areas. Taiwan thus focuses on events, institutions, and people who have played an important role in the sudden and dramatic realization of human rights on the island during the 1990s. The Mainland China section has a strong political focus, reflecting this area's inchoate state of human rights development. The Hong Kong section reflects the fact that under British administration, human rights became reasonably well established in the law, and the focus is now on preventing their erosion and expanding rights in new directions. Thus the Hong Kong section has a strong legalistic bent. There was no effort to apply all the concepts of the “International” section to the three jurisdictions, which have a relatively narrow focus.

International Conferences

The Chang Fo-chuan Center for the Study of Human Rights has been holding international conferences since its establishment in 2001. It held conferences on various topics including the following:

- National Human Rights Commissions (2001)

- Literature and Social Justice (2002)
- Indigenous Rights (2003)
- Human Rights Education (2004)
- Human Rights Education in a Diverse and Changing Asia (2006)
- Civics and Human Rights Education in Asia (2009)
- Propagation and Implementation of the Idea of Human Rights (2010)
- International Human Rights Covenants (2011)
- International Conference of Restorative Justice, Human Rights and Peace Education (March 2012)
- East Asia Symposium: Legislation and the Developing Asylum Policy in East Asia Responding to Forced Migration and Human Trafficking (October 2012).

Human Rights Week

The Chang Fo-chuan Center for the Study of Human Rights holds the Human Rights Week each year since 2004. It adopted a particular theme for each year, as in the following:

- Defending Tenzin Delek of Tibet (2004)
- Migrant Workers are not Slaves (2005)
- Free Burma (2006)
- Genocide in Darfur (2007)
- The 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (2008)
- The Suppressed Voices in China: Rights Defending, Tibet and Uyghur (2009)
- Anti-death Penalty Poster Exhibition, Music and films festival (2010).

Study Group and Mini-courses

In addition to conferences, Chang Fo-chuan Center for the Study of Human Rights holds study group sessions and mini-courses. The study group sessions have been held annually with topics ranging from discussion of human rights in relation to constitutionalism to discussion of theories of democracy and public reasoning. The mini-courses, on the other hand, took up

issues ranging from general human rights concepts to specific human rights issues to national human rights mechanism. See Annex for the list of topics taken up in the study group and mini-course topics.

Final Note

Looking back on the past fifteen years, it can only be said that the Center and the human rights programs, both the undergraduate and graduate, are still in the beginning stage of development and growth. They can be strengthened and expanded. The support and encouragement of the larger society definitely will play an important role, while the efforts of everyone at the Center and the programs, including the students, are indispensable.

Annex 1

Study Group Topics

- Human Rights and Constitutionalism: Immanuel Kant, Carlos Nino (2003)
- Evil and Punishment of Human Rights Violation: Hannah Arendt, Carlos Nino (2004)
- The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Archbishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu, Nelson Mandela, Commission's Final Report, Antjie Krog (2005)
- Radical Evil: Richard Bernstein (2006).
- Development, Poverty and the Capability Approach: Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum (2007)
- Globalization, Development and the Rights of the Disadvantaged: David Held, Joseph Stiglitz, Jeffrey Sachs, Peter Singer (2008)
- Global Poverty and Theories of Justice: Thomas Pogge, Amartya Sen (2009)
- Theories of Democracy and Public Reasoning: John Rawls, Amartya Sen and Ronald Dworkin (2010).

Mini Courses

- Prof. Theo van Boven, Maastricht University, the Netherlands. "International Human Rights Law: Concepts, Mechanism and the Practice" (2007)
- Prof. Ian Neary, University of Oxford, UK. "The Rights of the Children and Patients in Taiwan, Japan and South Korea" (2008)
- Prof. Flora Arellano, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, The Philippines. "Child Labor and Child Sex Workers in the Philippines" (2009)
- Prof. Zang Boshu, Independent Chinese Scholar, China. "The Constitutional Reform and Transition to a Democratic Society in China" (2010)
- Prof. Bill Black, the University of British Columbia, Canada. "Canadian Legal System and the Two International Human Rights Covenants" (2010)
- Prof. Theodore S. Orlin, Utica College, USA. "Responsibility to Protect (R2P): An Evolving Principle of International Law" (2011)

- Dr. Alessandro Amicarelli, Italy. “Human Rights, Minorities and Religious Freedom” (2012).

Endnotes

¹ *Human Rights Dictionary - International, Mainland China Hong Kong, and Taiwan* (Bilingual). Professor Mab Huang was the editor-in-chief, and Professors Theodore Orlin, James Seymour, Daniel Yu were the editors. It was published in Taipei in 2007.