



NEWS FROM

# Hemispheres

THE INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH CONSORTIUM  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

FALL 2010 **IN THIS ISSUE:** Historical Documents for Teaching about Human Rights

**WHAT ARE HUMAN RIGHTS?** Can you define them? Can your students? Why are they important, and who decides what they should be?

Human rights are significant because they represent the belief that we are all—individually and collectively—entitled to certain things as human beings. Today, many rights are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was drafted by representatives from around the world and has been translated into 375 dialects and languages (from Abkhaz to Zulu) in an attempt to make it universally accessible. As laudable as it is, the declaration is not complete, and people around the world continue to expand the definition of human rights as they strive to ensure their standard of living, maintain their traditions, and protect their environments.

In 2008, the Hemispheres Summer Teachers' Institute focused on contemporary human rights issues around the world, from the struggle to make education available in the Balkans to the provision of health care in the developing world. Our discussion of how human rights are currently conceived of and defined became the basis of our Fall 2008 newsletter (available for download from <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/orgs/hemispheres/>), which included a discussion of emerging areas of human rights debate. We also provided a classroom activity, "Vote with Your Feet," that allowed students to compare their concept of human rights with those of their classmates. We were, and continue to be, interested in the developing notion of human rights throughout the world.

In this country, the Bill of Rights establishes a set of rights that, although vigorously debated at times, are key to our national identity. But the idea of human rights is much older than the United States, and legal documents have addressed them in one form or another since ancient Persia. In order to understand where we are today, we need to learn about the origins of human rights and the historical predecessors to current legal rights.

Hemispheres is hard at work developing a classroom-ready curriculum unit entitled "Teaching about Rights: Historical Context, Contemporary Challenges," scheduled to be completed in spring 2011. The following activity is a teaser from that unit: a selection of documents that your students can use to trace the development of the idea of human rights through the ages.

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# ACTIVITY *Human Rights through History*

(1) Divide students into 5 groups.

Give each group one of the following excerpts.

(2) Groups begin by rewriting the excerpt in their own words. They should then answer the following questions:

- (a) In the document, who is the “giver” of rights? (b) What responsibilities do people in power have toward others? (c) What group has been given the outlined rights? Under what conditions? (d) What kinds rights are given (personal, political, economic, cultural, etc.)?

(3) In chronological order, each group presents its

document to the class. The class creates a timeline (either individually on sheets of paper or as a group on the board).

(4) Assign students one of the following tasks as homework: (a) Summarize the documents and describe how they build upon one another. (b) Compare and contrast the document you read with one of the other documents by discussing the key questions. (c) Read the U.S. Bill of Rights and discuss how it fits in with the historical documents presented in class.

## CYRUS CYLINDER (C. 539 BCE)

*The Cyrus Cylinder, discovered in 1879, is a document issued by the Persian ruler, Cyrus the Great. The cylinder, inscribed in Babylonian cuneiform, contains an account of his conquest of Babylon and capture of Nabonidus, the last Babylonian king. Reflecting a long tradition in Mesopotamia, Cyrus declares the reforms with which he will begin his reign.*

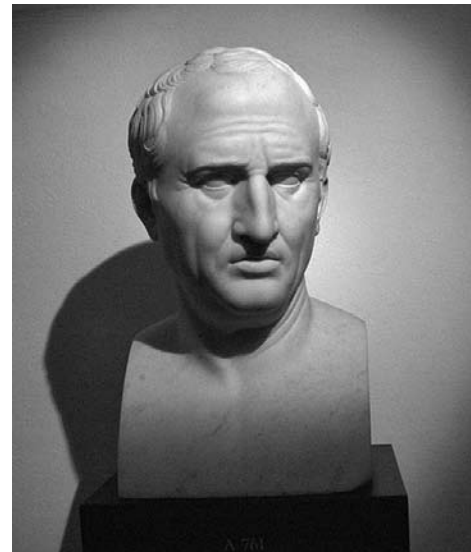
I am Cyrus, King of the globe, great king, mighty king, King of Babylon...progeny of an unending royal line, whose rule, The Gods, Bel and Nabu cherish, whose kingship they desire for their hearts and pleasures.

When I well disposed, entered Babylon, I had established the seat of government in the royal palace of the ruler, amidst jubilation and rejoicing. Marduk, the great god, induced the magnanimous inhabitants

of Babylon to love me, and I sought daily to worship him when my numerous soldiers in great numbers peacefully entered

Babylon and moved about undisturbed in the midst of the Babylonians. I did not allow anyone to terrorize the people of the lands of Sumer and Akad and...I kept in view, the needs of the people and all their sanctuaries to promote their well being. I strove for peace in Babylon and in all his other sacred cities. As to the inhabitants of Babylon who against the will of the gods were enslaved, I abolished the corvee [unpaid labor] which was against their social standing. I freed all slaves. I brought relief to their dilapidated housing, putting thus an end to their misfortunes and slavery. Marduk, the great lord, was well pleased with my deeds...and to all my troops he graciously gave his blessing, and in good spirit, before him we stood peacefully and praised him joyously.

Source: Cyrus the Great, <http://www.cyrusgreat.com/>.



## MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO, DE OFFICIIS (ON DUTIES, 44 BCE)

*Cicero (106–43 BCE) was an important philosopher, lawyer, orator, and politician who lived through the fall of the Roman Republic. While Cicero concerned himself mainly with the treatment of free people (not slaves), he coined the term humanitas (good person) and extended the notion of natural law to cover universal human concerns.*

The interests of society, however, and its common bonds will be best conserved, if kindness be shown to each individual in proportion to the closeness of his relationship. But it seems we must trace back to their ultimate sources the principles of fellowship and society that Nature has established among men. The first principle is that which is found in the connection subsisting between all the members of the human race; and that bond of connection is reason and speech, which by the processes of teaching and learning, of communicating, discussing, and reasoning associate men together and unite them in a sort of natural fraternity. In no other particular are we farther removed from the nature of beasts; for we admit that they may have courage (horses and lions, for example); but we do not admit that they have justice, equity, and goodness; for they are not endowed with reason or speech.

## THE QUR'AN (610–632 CE)

*The central religious text of Islam, which Muslims believe was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad by God. In addition to providing divine guidance and direction, it provides the framework for Islamic laws (collectively referred to as shariah).*

O, believers, you should not eat up each other's wealth in vanities, but trade by mutual consent; and do not destroy yourselves. God is merciful to you. If someone does so through oppression or injustice, We shall cast him into Hell: easy it is for God. [4:29]

O you who believe! Stand out firmly for God as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others make you swerve to wrongdoing and depart from the path of justice. Be just: that is next to piety, and fear God, for God knows all that you do. [5:9]

Charities shall go to the poor, the needy, the workers who collect them, the new converts, to free the slaves, to those burdened by sudden expenses, in the cause of God, and to the traveling wayfarer. Such is God's commandment, and God is full of knowledge and wisdom. [9:60]

This, then, is the most comprehensive bond that unites together men as men and all to all; and under it the common right to all things that Nature has produced for the common use of man is to be maintained, with the understanding that, while everything assigned as private property by the statutes and by civil law shall be so held as prescribed by those same laws, everything else shall be regarded in the light indicated by the Greek proverb: "Amongst friends all things in common."

Furthermore, we find the common property of all men in things of the sort defined by Ennius; and, though restricted by him to one instance, the principle may be applied very generally:

*Who kindly sets a wand'rer on his way  
Does e'en as if he lit another's lamp by his:  
No less shines his, when he his friend's hath lit.*

In this example he effectively teaches us all to bestow even upon a stranger what it costs us nothing to give.

Source: Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *De Officiis*. Trans. Walter Miller. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913. 50–52.  
[http://www.constitution.org/rom/de\\_officiis.htm](http://www.constitution.org/rom/de_officiis.htm).



"O my people! Give just measure and weight, nor withhold from the people the things that are their due. Do not commit evil in the land with intent to do mischief!" [11:85]

Kill not your children for fear of want: we shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. The killing of them is a great sin. Nor come to adultery, for it is a shameful deed, and it is an evil, opening the road to other evils. Nor take life—which God has made sacred—except in the course of justice. And if anyone is slain wrongfully, we have given his heir authority to demand reparations or to forgive, but let him not exceed bounds in the matter. [17:31-33]

You shall not accept any information, unless you verify it for yourself. Every act of hearing, or of seeing, or of feeling in the heart will be examined on the Day of Judgment. [17:36]

O you who believe! Enter not houses other than your own, until you have asked permission and given respect to those in them. If you find no one in the house, do not enter until permission is given. If you are asked to go back, go back. That makes for greater purity for yourselves. It is no fault on your part to enter houses not used for living in, which serve some other use for you—God has knowledge of what you reveal and what you conceal. [24:27-29]

O mankind! We created you from the same pair, male and female, and made you into nations and tribes so that you may come to know one another, not that you may despise each other. The most honored of you in the sight of God is the one who is most righteous. [49:13]

God does not forbid you from befriending those who do not fight you because of your faith, and do not evict you from your homes. You may befriend them and be kind and just towards them. [60:8]

Source: A. Yusuf Ali. *The Glorious Qur'an*. Burr Ridge, IL: American Trust Publications, 1977.



## MAGNA CARTA (1215 CE)

*Magna Carta Libertatum* (Great Charter of Freedoms) was signed by King John of England. One of the most important legal documents in the history of democracy, it was forced on the king by his subjects and it limited his powers—establishing that even the king was not above the law.

... WE HAVE GRANTED TO GOD, and by this present charter have confirmed for us and our heirs in perpetuity, that the English Church shall be free, and shall have its rights undiminished, and its liberties unimpaired. . . .

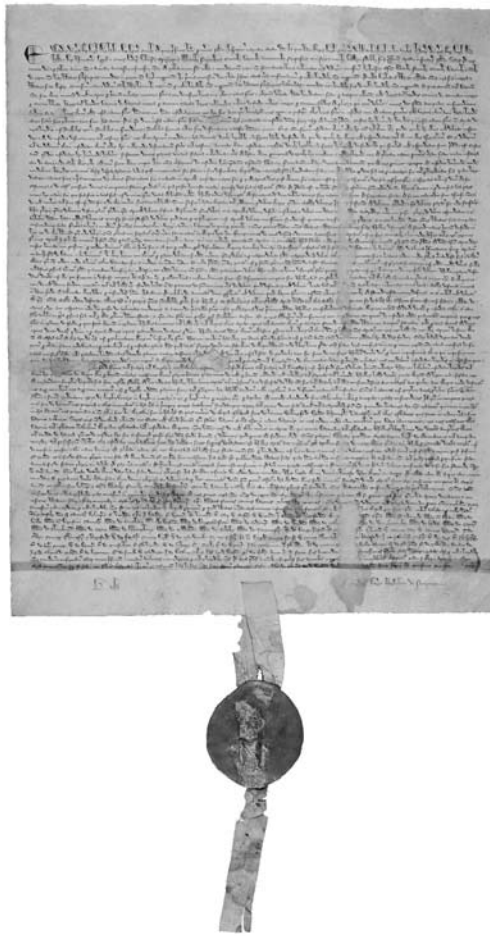
TO ALL FREE MEN OF OUR KINGDOM we have also granted, for us and our heirs for ever, all the liberties written out below, to have and to keep for them and their heirs, of us and our heirs: . . .

(8) No widow shall be compelled to marry, so long as she wishes to remain without a husband. But she must give security that she will not marry without royal consent, if she holds her lands of the Crown, or without the consent of whatever other lord she may hold them of.

(9) Neither we nor our officials will seize any land or rent in payment of a debt, so long as the debtor has movable goods sufficient to discharge the debt.

(20) For a trivial offence, a free man shall be fined only in proportion to the degree of his offence, and for a serious offence correspondingly, but not so heavily as to deprive him of his livelihood.

(28) No constable or other royal official shall take corn or other movable goods from any man without immediate payment, unless the seller voluntarily offers postponement of this.



(38) In future no official shall place a man on trial upon his own unsupported statement, without producing credible witnesses to the truth of it.

(39) No free man shall be seized or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights or possessions, or outlawed or exiled, or deprived of his standing in any other way, nor will we proceed with force against him, or send others to do so, except by the lawful judgement of his equals or by the law of the land.

(40) To no one will we sell, to no one deny or delay right or justice.

(45) We will appoint as justices, constables, sheriffs, or other officials, only men that know the law of the realm and are minded to keep it well.

(52) To any man whom we have deprived or dispossessed of lands, castles, liberties, or rights, without the lawful judgement of his equals, we will at once restore these. . . .

(60) All these customs and liberties that we have granted shall be observed in our kingdom in so far as concerns our own relations with our subjects. Let all men of our kingdom, whether clergy or laymen, observe them similarly in their relations with their own men.

(61) . . . We will not seek to procure from anyone, either by our own efforts or those of a third party, anything by which any part of these concessions or liberties might be revoked or diminished. Should such a thing be procured, it shall be null and void and we will at no time make use of it, either ourselves or through a third party.

(63) IT IS ACCORDINGLY OUR WISH AND COMMAND that the English Church shall be free, and that men in our kingdom shall have and keep all these liberties, rights, and concessions, well and peaceably in their fullness and entirety for them and their heirs, of us and our heirs, in all things and all places for ever.

Source: Internet History Sourcebooks Project, Fordham University, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/magnacarta.html>.

## DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN AND OF THE CITIZEN (1789)

Issued by the National Assembly of the French Revolution, this document claims rights as universal.

The representatives of the French people, organized as a National Assembly, believing that the ignorance, neglect, or contempt of the rights of man are the sole cause of public calamities and of the corruption of governments, have determined to set forth in a solemn declaration the natural, unalienable, and sacred rights of man . . . Therefore the National Assembly recognizes and proclaims, in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being, the following rights of man and of the citizen:

1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good.

2. The aim of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.

4. Liberty consists in the freedom to do everything which injures no one else; hence the exercise of the natural rights of each man has no limits except those which assure to the other members of the society the enjoyment of the same rights. These limits can only be determined by law.

6. Law is the expression of the general will. Every citizen has a right to participate personally, or through his representative, in its foundation. It must be the same for all, whether it protects or punishes. All citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, are equally eligible to all dignities and to all public positions and occupations, according to their abilities, and without distinction except that of their virtues and talents.

7. No person shall be accused, arrested, or imprisoned except in the cases and according to the forms prescribed by law. Any one soliciting, transmitting, executing, or causing to be executed, any arbitrary order, shall be punished. But any citizen summoned or arrested in virtue of the law shall submit without delay, as resistance constitutes an offense.

9. As all persons are held innocent until they shall have been declared guilty, if arrest shall be deemed indispensable, all harshness not essential to the securing of the prisoner's person shall be severely repressed by law.

10. No one shall be disquieted on account of his opinions, including his religious views, provided their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by law.

11. The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Every citizen may, accordingly, speak, write, and print with freedom, but shall be responsible for such abuses of this freedom as shall be defined by law.

15. Society has the right to require of every public agent an account of his administration.

17. Since property is an inviolable and sacred right, no one shall be deprived thereof except where public necessity, legally determined, shall clearly demand it, and then only on condition that the owner shall have been previously and equitably indemnified.

Source: Human and Constitutional Rights, Arthur W. Diamond Law Library, Columbia Law School, <http://www.hrcr.org/docs/frenchdec.html>.





## UPCOMING WORKSHOP

### AT THE CROSSROADS: INTEGRATING THE BALKANS INTO THE EUROPEAN UNION

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2010

Several Balkan states are eligible to become members of the European Union, but thus far Slovenia, Bulgaria, and Romania are the only post-Communist Balkan countries to have achieved member status. What challenges do the other ex-Yugoslav countries still face, and what advantages would they see as EU members? Who is moving toward economic stabilization and regional cooperation, and who is struggling with reconstruction and their war-torn past?

The Center for Russian, East European & Eurasian Studies and the Center for European Studies are offering a one-day workshop for secondary educators. UT professors will discuss the history of the EU and the current progress of several countries, and then explore ways to incorporate the ideas into curriculum materials for classroom use.

The workshop will be held on the campus of the University of Texas at Austin. Registration is free and includes handouts, parking, lunch, and snacks. Registration is limited to 25 teachers on a first-come, first-served basis.

For more information and registration, please visit [http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/european\\_studies/Outreach/Workshops.php](http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/european_studies/Outreach/Workshops.php) or contact Allegra Azulay, CREEES Outreach Coordinator, at [aazulay@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:aazulay@mail.utexas.edu) or 512/471-7782.

# Hemispheres

## HEMISPHERES WELCOMES THE CENTER FOR EUROPEAN STUDIES

We are pleased to announce that UT's Center for European Studies (CES) has received a more than \$1.6 million Title VI grant from the U.S. Department of Education and has been designated a National Resource Center, allowing it to strengthen its role as a national leader in its field. The funding also allows CES to participate in Hemispheres activities, making it Hemispheres's fifth full partner.

The Center for European Studies serves as a resource for K-12 teachers, area businesses, local government agencies, and the general public. Through conferences, teacher workshops, sponsored international speakers, and a variety of other venues, CES aims to increase and enhance the understanding of Western and Central Europe's cultures, history, and languages. The Center maintains a speakers bureau as well as a lending library that includes books, DVDs, and travel trunks, and hosts events at UT that are free and open to the public.

For information on CES programming, please contact Sally K. Dickson, Outreach Coordinator, at [Sally.Dickson@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:Sally.Dickson@mail.utexas.edu) or 512/232-4311.

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