I. Call to Order and Land Acknowledgment

Section President Courtney Hillebrecht called the meeting to order at 12.32 pm. She began with a land acknowledgment:

_We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and, most recently, the territory of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation. The territory was the subject of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement among the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. This territory is also covered by the Upper Canada Treaties. Today, the meeting place of Toronto (from the Haudenosaunee word Tkaronto) is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in the community, on this territory._

II. State of the Section

Courtney noted the robust growth in both membership and spirit, and reported that as of 2019 the Human Rights Section has 611 members, from 576 last year. A decade ago, the section had 312 members and, in 2006, just 12. At this year’s meeting, the section has also sponsored 59 panels. She thanked this year’s section program chairs, Daniel Whelan and Claire Apodaca, for their hard work.

Financially, the section is quite solvent. A new initiative this year, the Chandra Sriram Human Rights Section Global South Travel Grant, provides travel grants to global South scholars. This year’s recipients were Ricardo Prata Filho (Brazil) and Avantika Dureha (India).

III. Election Results & Newly Appointed Officers

Courtney thanked outgoing committee members Anu Chakravarty and Mikyoung Kim (at-large members) for their service and reported results of this year’s elections. The new officers are Lisa Sundstrom (president), Tina Kempin Reuter (treasurer), Jackie McAllister and Heather Smith Cannoy (at-large members) and Freek van der Vet (elections officer).

IV. Charter Amendment

Courtney described a proposal to turn a current ad hoc position as the Section’s H-Net listserv moderator into an elected office under the title, “Outreach and Membership Engagement” officer. The current moderator, Chris (name needed), explained that the current list has approximately 1,500 members. Both Courtney and Chris noted that posting section information via ISA is cumbersome, so a broader social media presence is warranted.
To make this change, a change in the Section Charter is required. These changes would include the following language:

I. The elected officers shall consist of a Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Outreach and Membership Engagement Officer and four Members-At-Large. Appointed officers include the Program Chair(s) and the Elections Officer. Each elected officer shall serve a term of two years. Elected and appointed officers, plus the Chair-Elect, Past Chair and Lead Editor of H-Human Rights, comprise the Executive Committee (ExComm) of the Section. Only elected officers will have a vote on the Executive Committee.

II. The Community and Membership Engagement Officer shall serve as the Lead Editor of H-Net and maintain the membership’s social media presence.

These changes were approved by unanimous consent after being duly moved.

V. Awards

The meeting then turned to annual awards. Lisa Sundstrom announced that this year’s Human Rights Distinguished Scholar Award will be presented to Kathryn Sikkink of Harvard University this evening at the Human Rights Section’s Reception, 7:30-8:30 pm in the Chestnut East room of the Sheraton hotel. This will be preceded by a panel arranged to recognize her contributions from 4:00 pm until 5:45 pm.

Next, Lucrecia Garcia Iommi presented the Best Book Award. This recognizes an outstanding monograph in the field of human rights published within the past two years. Nominated books are evaluated for excellence and impact in terms of germaneness, substance, originality, and timeliness. Lucrecia noted the number (35) and quality of submissions this year, and announced the award has gone to Mala Htun and S. Laurel Weldon for The Logics of Gender Justice -State Action on Women's Rights Around the World (Cambridge, 2018). She also noted the two other finalists for this year’s award, Oliver Kaplan, author of Resisting War-How Communities Protect Themselves (Cambridge, 2017) and Margaret Roberts, author of Censored- Distraction and Diversion Inside China's Great Firewall (Princeton, 2018).

The Best Paper Award is given to the author or authors of the best paper presented at the previous year’s ISA Annual Convention by a faculty member (regardless of academic rank) or human rights professional/activist. Award committee chair Rebecca Sanders presented this award to Benjamin A.T. Graham and Kelebogile Zvobgo for their 2018 paper, “The World Bank as an Enforcer of Human Rights.”

The Steven C. Poe Best Graduate Student Paper, given to the author of the best paper presented at the previous year’s ISA Annual Convention by a graduate student, was presented by Award Committee member Tina Kempin Reuter. The winner was Jeonghyon Kim, of the University of Nebraska, for her paper, “The Politics of Refugees: Comparative Case Studies on Canada and Australia.”
Finally, Lisa described a new award, the Human Rights Section – Lynne Rienner Publishers Award for Best Dissertation. The purpose of this award is to recognize the best dissertation in the field of human rights that has been defended within two years of the annual nomination deadline. Dissertations that ask timely and important questions and deploy innovative methods to answer those questions, as well as dissertations that engage directly with ongoing debates within the human rights field, are particularly invited for consideration. Committee chair Mahmood Monshipouri announced that the inaugural winner is Filiz Kahraman of the University of Washington, for “Claiming Labor Rights as Human Rights: Legal Mobilization at the European Court of Human Rights.” The two other finalists were Nina Reiners for “Transnational Lawmaking Coalitions for Human Rights,” and Rochelle Layla Terman, for “Backlash: Defiance, Human Rights and the Politics of Shame.”

A questioner from the floor asked that the names and titles of awardees be posted; Lisa affirmed this will happen. She then closed this part of the meeting by thanking all of the many people who participated in the awards process and made these awards possible. She also noted that the deadline for next year’s nominations is June 15, 2019, except for the dissertation award, which has a deadline of July 15, 2019. A questioner from the floor asked if papers must be presented on section-sponsored panels to be considered for the ‘Best Paper” and “Steven C. Poe Best Graduate Student Paper” awards. The answer was affirmative.

VI. Joint Conference 2020 in London

Lisa announced a joint conference with the Human Rights Section of APSA is being planned for June 2020 in London, as part of the ACUNs conference. The theme will be “Human Rights and Foreign Policy.” Kurt Mills and Daniel Whelan (both of whom were in attendance) are the key organizers. The conference will likely be held at the University of London’s Senate House. Kurt Mills reported that negotiations with potential partners are underway.

At 1.06 pm the floor was open to new business and any other questions. Natalie Hudson (University of Dayton) announced that Dayton’s Human Rights Center is hosting a conference on “The Social Practices of Human Rights” October 1-4, 2019. She encouraged section members to submit proposals. The deadline is April 15, but might be extended. For more information, see the following: https://www.udayton.edu/blogs/udhumanrights/2019/19-03-06-sphr19-cfp.php.

Kurt Mills (University of Dundee) announced that his school has just approved a one-year Masters program on human rights and conflict.

Bethany Barratt announced that a human rights pedagogy workshop will be held in conjunction with the 2019 APSA meeting in Washington, DC. The workshop will be on August 28, 2019, and participation does not require full conference registration. More information is available here: https://connect.apsanet.org/apsa2019/pre-conference-short-courses-2/.

Lisa and Courtney closed the meeting by urging section members to attend human rights panels still on the schedule. The meeting adjourned at 1.10 pm.

Robert Shepherd
Secretary