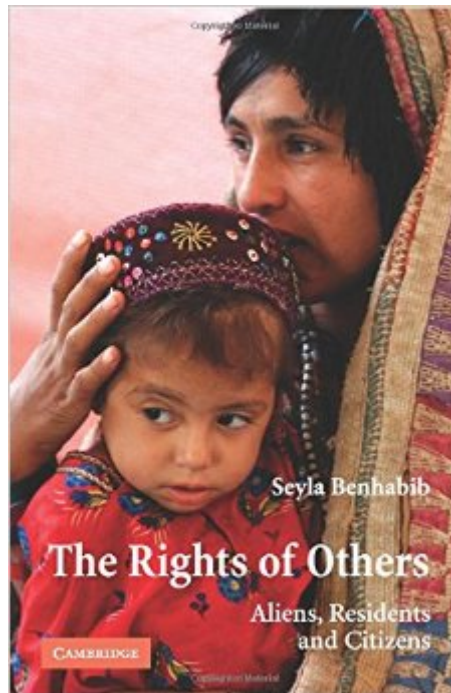


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The Rights Of Others: Aliens, Residents, And Citizens (The Seeley Lectures)



Synopsis

This book explores the tension between universal principles of human rights and the self-determination claims of sovereign states as they affect the claims of refugees, asylum-seekers and immigrants. Drawing on the work of Kant's "cosmopolitan doctrine" and positions developed by Hannah Arendt, Seyla Benhabib explores how the topic has been analyzed within the larger history of political thought. She argues that many of the issues raised in abstract debate between universalism and multiculturalism can find acceptable solutions in practice.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Professor Benhabib's analysis of the relationship between citizenship and community membership provides an innovative and exceedingly compelling way of navigating the conflicting claims of human rights and democratic sovereignty. Drawing heavily on Arendt and Kant, this study traces the conceptual basis for current theoretical problems while also attending to the contemporary situation. Perhaps most fascinating is Benhabib's usage of discourse ethics and her notion of 'democratic iterations' to move beyond the impasse posed by the false dichotomy of communitarian and cosmopolitan ideals-- in a sense, as long as we construe democratic sovereignty in a way that eschews claims to a permanent unchanging people there need not be any contradiction between maintaining cosmopolitan obligations and respecting communal claims. Though I have some minor personal qualms with Professor Benhabib's interpretation of Arendt, I found 'The Rights of Others' to

be an amazing read that combined insightful interpretations of political thought with astute observations of our global situation. A must read for those interested in global justice, cosmopolitanism and human rights theory.

There's a lot to like in this book. The discussion of Hannah Arendt's idea of the "right to have rights" and of Kant's views on cosmopolitanism are very good and useful to anyone interested in either thinker or in human rights. The invocation of Derrida to develop an idea of cosmopolitan democracy was interesting even if somewhat obscure. (I didn't think that invoking Derrida's idea of 'iteration' helped at all but then the idea is not clear to me so perhaps that's the problem.) The discussion of Rawls is, however, no good at all as Benhabib gets both the point and the structure of Rawls's *Law of Peoples* almost completely wrong. If that part is skipped, however, this is a very interesting book both for its discussion of historical figures and for its engagement with current problems such as citizenship, immigration, and cosmopolitanism.

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