

George Mason University
Schar School of Policy and Government

Human Rights

GOVT 445

Spring Semester 2019
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 3:00 p.m. - 4:15 p.m.
(Three Credits)

DRAFT SYLLABUS

Instructor: Rainer Braun
Location: tba
Office hours: Thursdays after class and by appointment
E-mail address: rb2060@columbia.edu

Course Description:

Human rights are the most widely accepted system of norms in the world and one of the key mandates for the United Nations. From the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 until today, human rights have spawned a catalogue of multilateral treaties, an administrative machinery, a network of professional non-governmental organizations, and countless domestic and international political initiatives on their behalf. This introductory seminar will explain the origin of human rights, their relationship to international law, the role of international organizations, and modern concepts for analyzing them.

Course Objectives:

At the successful conclusion of this course, students will have learned about:

- how human rights relate to theories of ethics and to theories of international relations
- the relationship between human rights and international and domestic law
- the United Nations' role in defining norms and addressing violations
- the significance of human rights in foreign policy making
- civil society's role in advocacy

Student Responsibilities and Assignments:

Students are expected to attend all sessions and participate in class discussions based on the readings of the course materials. For full credit, students will make a presentation in class, take a mid-term exam, and complete the final assignment.

Students are required to prepare for class by reading the assigned materials for the respective session.

1. Class Presentation

Each student will make a presentation on a governmental or non-governmental human rights organization. Presentations will introduce the organization's history, its major stakeholders, its focus and structure. The presentation will assess the organizations effectiveness, present critical voices, and illustrate on a specific case how the organization operates.

2. Mid-term Examination

Students will take a short test to ensure that the concepts studied so far have been understood. The test will consist of 10-15 factual and conceptual questions that can usually be answered in a single sentence. Students are strongly discouraged from writing essays to answer these questions. The exam is closed book and does not feature multiple choice questions.

The mid-term exam will be held in class during week 7 on March 7.

3. Final Assignment

The final assignment for the semester is an academic term paper on a human rights topic. Students are free to choose a topic that may or may not have been discussed in class. All topics will need to be approved by the instructor. Students should therefore submit a paper proposal for their topic by week 9 of the semester. The evaluation of the final assessment is based on the scholarly merit of the paper.

The paper should be between 3000 and 4000 words long. The final assignment is due by the last day of class.

Assessment Scale:

The final grade will be determined by the presentation and overall participation (30%), the mid-term exam (30%), and the final assignment (40%).

Literature:

The required readings for the course can be found in the textbook and in additional materials available online.

Textbook:

Haas, Michael. 2014. *International Human Rights: A Comprehensive Introduction; 2nd Edition*. New York: Routledge.

The paperback edition of this book retails for \$50.

Official Policies:

1. Academic Dishonesty

Any form of academic dishonesty will meet severe consequences. Students who have been found guilty of cheating may be expelled from the university with a permanent note on their records.

Academic dishonesty includes all forms of cheating that violate proper academic procedure, for example plagiarism, submitting work by other people, and the failure to credit other people's work and ideas. A basic guideline to avoid charges of plagiarism is the 'three word rule': whenever three words or more are copied verbatim (meaning word for word) they need to be put in quotation marks and referenced properly.

GMU is an *Honor Code University*. Please see the Office for Academic Integrity for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. An essential part of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Students should always treat each other with civility and mutual respect, especially during the discussion of controversial issues.

2. Paper Submission

The final paper must be submitted by e-mail as an attachment in either a .doc or .pdf format (or their current variations). Do not mail a link to an online document for your final assignment. The deadline for the final assignment is the last day of classes of the semester.

GMU's policies on late and missing submissions will be discussed in class.

3. Paper Format

Students should use the "Style Manual for Political Science" by the American Political Science Association (APSA) as a guide for formatting their papers. The manual is available, free of charge, at:

<https://connect.apsanet.org/stylemanual/>

4. Special Needs

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at (703) 993-2474. All academic accommodation must be arranged through the DRC.

Class Schedule:Week 1

(January 22)

Introduction and Course Organization

(January 24)

Setting the Framework

Lit:

Krasner, Stephen. 1999. *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Chapter 2 "Theories of Institutions and International Politics" and Chapter 4: "Rulers and Ruled: Human Rights").

Week 2

(January 29 & 31)

Defining Rights

Lit:

Naim, Moises. 2014. *The End of Power*. New York, NY: Basic Books. (Chapter 2 "Making Sense of Power: How It Works And How To Keep It" and Chapter 3: "How Power Got Big: An Assumption's Unquestioned Rise").

Singer, Peter. 1972. "Famine, Affluence, and Morality." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1(3): 229-243.

Week 3

(February 5 & 7)

The Philosophical Basis for Human Rights

Lit:

Haas: Chapters 1 & 2.

Fields, A. Belden. 2003. *Rethinking Human Rights for the New Millennium*. New York: Palgrave (Chapter One: "The Birth of the Human Rights Idea and Its Detractors").

Edmunds, June. 2013. "Human Rights, Islam and the Failure of Cosmopolitanism." *Ethnicities* 13(6): 671-688.

Week 4

(February 12 & 14)

How Did We Get Here?

Lit:

Haas: Chapters 3 & 4.

Zwingel, Susanne. 2012. "How do Norms Travel? Theorizing International Women's Rights in Transnational Perspective." *International Studies Quarterly* 56(1): 115-129.

Week 5

(February 19 & 21)

What Kinds of Rights?

Lit:

Haas: Chapters 5 & 6.

Künnemann, Rolf. 2017. *Human Rights for People's Sovereignty*. Heidelberg: FIAN International. (Chapters 2-3).

Alchian, Armen. 2002. "Property Rights." In *The Concise Encyclopedia of Economics*. <<http://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/PropertyRights>>

Week 6

(February 26 & 28)

Massive Violations: Crimes against Humanity

Lit:

Haas: Chapters 7 & 8.

Forsythe, David P. 2012. "The UN Security Council and Responses to Atrocities: International Criminal Law and the P-5." *Human Rights Quarterly* 34(3): 840-863.

Week 7

(March 5)

How to Study Human Rights

Lit:

Landman, Todd. 2006. *Studying Human Rights*. New York: Routledge (Chapter 3: "Social Theory and Human Rights").

(March 7)

MID-TERM

Spring Break

Week 8

(March 19 & 21)

Human Rights and the UN System I

Lit:

Haas: Chapter 9.

Keohane, Robert. 1992. "A Functional Theory of Regimes." In *International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues, 3rd edition*, eds. R. Art and R. Jervis. New York: Harper Collins.

Week 9

(March 26 & 28)

Human Rights and the UN System II

Lit:

Haas: Chapter 10.

O'Flaherty, Michael. 2014. "The Strengthening Process of the Human Rights Treaty Bodies." *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting (American Society of International Law)* 108(April): 285-288.

Week 10

(April 2 & 4)

Human Rights and the United States

Lit:

Haas: Chapter 11.

Forsythe, David P. 2011. "US Foreign Policy and Human Rights: Situating Obama." *Human Rights Quarterly* 33(3): 767-789.

Week 11

(April 9 & 11)

Human Rights in Europe

Lit:

Haas: Chapter 12.

Week 12

(April 16 & 18)

Human Rights and Development

Lit:

Haas: Chapter 13.

Pogge, Thomas, and Mitu Sengupta. 2016. "Assessing the Sustainable Development Goals from a Human Rights Perspective." *Journal of International and Comparative Social Policy* 32(2): 83-97.

International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF). 2014. *The Fairness Gap: Farmer Incomes and Root Cause Solutions to Ending Child Labor in the Cocoa Industry*. Washington, DC: ILRF.

Week 13

(April 23 & 25)

Human Rights Business: Corporate Social Responsibility

Lit:

Connolly, Nicholas, and Manette Kaisershot. 2015. "Corporate power and human rights." *The International Journal of Human Rights* 19(6): 663-672.

- Greer, Benjamin Thomas, and Jeffrey G. Purvis. 2016. "Corporate Supply Chain Transparency: California's Seminal Attempt to Discourage Forced Labor." *The International Journal of Human Rights* 20(1): 55-77.
- Goodpaster, Kenneth E., and John B. Matthews Jr. 2003. "Can a Corporation Have a Conscience?" In *Harvard Business Review on Corporate Responsibility*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School.

Week 14

(April 30 & May 2)

Outlook: Rethinking Sovereignty and Redefining Standards

Lit:

- Hiskes, Richard P. 2017. "With apologies to the future: environmental human rights and the politics of communal responsibility." *The International Journal of Human Rights* 21(9): 1401-1416.
- Freeman, Michael. 2011. *Human Rights: An Interdisciplinary Approach, 2nd Edition*. Malden, MA: Polity Press. (Chapter Nine: "Human Rights in the Twenty-first Century").