DESCRIPTION:
Human rights do not only evoke a set of indispensable liberal freedoms but they also imply an agenda for making the world a better place, a place in which, after a long history of struggles, the dignity of each human being will enjoy secure international protection. Writing at the beginning of the 21st century and looking at the dense structure of legal and political standards one could, indeed, emphasize the power and transformative capacity of human rights in today’s world society. At the same time, however, changes and crises in the global economy, renewed geopolitical conflicts and power shifts in the international system as well as the rise of populist and xenophobic movements in Western countries seem to highlight the fragility, contingency and uncertain future of the global human rights regime. This course will introduce students to selected issues, problems and recent developments in the field of human rights. It focuses especially (but not exclusively) on European perspectives, debates, actors and institutions.

The course is divided into four parts. Part I traces the historical development of human rights from ideas and declarations to the emergence of social movements and, finally, to the creation of regional and global human rights regimes. The basic question in this part is whether this evolutionary process can be interpreted as a successful case of value generalization in modern world society. Part II introduces the European system of human rights protection. This system is characterized by a heterarchical relationship between the European Court of Human Rights and domestic courts. In addition, central topics related to the question of freedom of religion, to the status of refugees and migrants as well as to the potential conflict between EU law and UN law in the case of counter-terrorism measures will be discussed. Part III focuses on selected issues such as the creation of new human rights standards, the problem of implementation, the prosecution of human rights violations, as well as the question of political legitimacy in the case of conflicting understandings of justice in different cultural contexts. Part IV analyzes the power and fragility of human rights in today’s world society. Recent transformations in the international system and the global economy highlight the potential as well as the limits of human rights understood as a unifying idea, movement or structure of global governance.

CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: Prior intermediate coursework in International Relations, Politics, Law, or Cultural Studies.

ADDITIONAL COST: None

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:
Methodologically this course adopts a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach combining the perspectives of international law, international relations, political theory, history, sociology and cultural studies. To increase understanding of human rights and to introduce students to the complexities of human rights, texts and perspectives from various disciplines are offered and discussed.

The course will also selectively use a case method that helps students develop the ability to read and analyze a case involving real parties with real problems. Local field trips to the European Court of Human Rights (Strasbourg) and to the UNHCR (Geneva) will highlight the practical relevance of the substantive issues and methodological approaches introduced and discussed during class.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Course participation - 10%
Course Participation
Seminar discussions are based upon the compulsory readings and teaching introductions to the subject given at each session. The lecturer will give an introduction and background to the topic and all students are expected to join the seminar discussions following the teaching introductions with prepared questions and points related to the readings.

Midterm Exam
The midterm exam (90 minutes) consists of three essay questions covering the material of the first nine sessions.

Final Exam
The final exam (90 minutes) consists of three essay questions, based on arguments, facts, compulsory readings and other material distributed in class

Research Paper
The term paper should cover 10-12 pages (4000-5000 words) and involves academic research. Students are required to discuss the research topic and potential research methods with their instructor prior to the research process and to hand in an abstract as well as a provisional bibliography.

Other:
Critical writing assignment: The critical writing assignment (750-1000 words) will be written on a session-related topic and will include an analysis of a primary source (international agreement, convention, charter or declaration). This assignment will develop the capacity for critical academic analysis and will serve as a basis for seminar discussions.

Written case brief: Students will reduce a selected case to its basic components (such as the facts of a controversy, the legal issue that a court decides, the legal resolution that a court reaches as well as the reasoning that a court uses to explain its decision) and outline these components in a written case brief (500-750 words). This assignment will prepare students for a local field trip to the European Court of Human Rights.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:
By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Analyze the major qualitative steps in the genealogy of human rights
- Analyze the main global and regional human rights regimes
- Analyze the European system of human rights protection
- Discuss specific issues related to the effective implementation of human rights in Europe and beyond
- Demonstrate an understanding of selected problems in the field of human rights protection
- Reduce a legal case to its basic components
- Analyze critically primary sources such as international conventions and agreements

ATTENDANCE POLICY:
All IES courses require attendance and participation. Attendance is mandatory per IES policy. Any unexcused absence will incur a penalty on your final course grade (1 absence - 1%, 2nd absence -2%, 3rd absence – 3%). Any student who has more than three (3) unexcused absences will receive an “F” as the final grade in the course. Any student who misses more than 25% of a course, whether the absences are excused or are unexcused, will receive an “F” as the final grade in the course.

Absences due to sickness, religious observances, and family emergencies may be excusable at the discretion of the Center Director.
In the case of an excused absence, it is the student’s responsibility to inform the Academic Dean of the absence with an Official Excused Absence Form, as well as any other relevant documentation (e.g. a doctor’s note), and to keep a record thereof. The absence form must be turned in as soon as possible before the class, in the case of a planned absence, or immediately upon return to the Center, in the case of an unplanned absence, in order for the absence to be considered excused. It is also the student’s responsibility to inform the professor of the missed class. Students can collect and submit the Official Excused Absence Form from the office of the Academic Dean.

**TESTS, QUIZZES, OR PRESENTATIONS MISSED DURING UNEXCUSED ABSENCES CANNOT BE MADE UP!**

**ASSIGNMENTS NOT HANDED IN ON THE DUE DATE WILL BE SUBJECT TO A 3% PENALTY PER DAY POST-DUE DATE (with the exception of students who have an excused absence).**

**CONTENT:**

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<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><strong>I. Human Rights: From Ideas to Global Governance</strong>&lt;br&gt; <em>The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: A Case of Successful Value Generalization?</em>&lt;br&gt;In the first session, we will focus on the genesis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We will examine the historical background to the declaration, scrutinize the collective process through which the declaration was composed by a diverse group of authors and critically discuss if this process can be considered a successful case of value generalization in modern world society reconciling different cultural traditions.</td>
<td>• Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)&lt;br&gt;• Waltz, Susan (2002) ‘Reclaiming and Rebuilding the History of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights’, Third World Quarterly 23, pp. 437-448.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td><strong>Rights and Human Rights: Concepts and Theories</strong>&lt;br&gt;This class looks at the character of rights in general and human rights in particular. What does it mean to have a right? Human rights are the rights one has because one is human. But how are being human and having rights related? These questions will be considered by examining their conceptual, philosophical and normative dimensions.</td>
<td>• Griffin, James (2001) ‘First Steps in an Account of Human Rights’, European Journal of Philosophy 9: 3, pp. 306-327.</td>
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| 4. | After the revolutions in the late eighteenth century, human rights discourse was increasingly marginalized by other concepts of a European-dominated world such as ‘nation’, ‘race’, and ‘class’. This session will discuss the possibility of an ‘affirmative genealogy’ of human rights between historical teleology and radical contingency. From a philosophical point of view, we will consider how it can be meaningful to speak of human rights in a culturally diverse world and how it might be possible to come to a global consensus on human rights standards. | Norton & Co, pp. 176-214.  
|---|---|---|
| 5. | The Last Utopia? Human Rights as Transnational Movement  
Between the 1970s and the 1980s, the human rights movement achieved unprecedented global prominence. Across Eastern and Western Europe, as well as throughout the United States and Latin America, human rights morphed into a transnational social movement leaving behind the narrow confines of the United Nations and moving towards a global network of human rights activism. In this context we will critically discuss Samuel Moyn’s important thesis that it was on the ruins of earlier political utopias that human rights achieved contemporary prominence. |  
|  | International Human Rights Regimes in World Society: Institutions, Actors and Processes  
This class turns to the international politics of human rights and provides an extended survey of multilateral human rights regimes. Students will learn about the main actors and institutions on the global level (such as the UN Human Rights Council, the “treaty bodies” established under the leading international human rights treaties, and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights) and compare different regional human rights regimes. Additionally, an overview of the most important single-issue human rights regimes will complete the picture. |  |
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<th>II. Human Rights Protection in Europe</th>
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<td>This class focuses on the system of human rights protection in Europe with the European Convention of Human Rights as its governing quasi-constitutional instrument. This system is characterized by a heterarchical relationship between the European Court of Human Rights and domestic courts in the European Union. This relationship is described by some legal scholars as an ‘open architecture’ showing not only conflicts over questions of ultimate supremacy but also dialogue and convergence in practice.</td>
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<td>• European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)</td>
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<td>In Europe, the new visibility of Islam in the public sphere challenges the established boundaries between public and private, especially in countries like France where an assertive form of secularism used to govern relations between church and state. Individual actors increasingly use the available legal framework to advocate greater freedom of religious expression in the name of individual human rights. The European Court of Human Rights is at the very center of the redrawing of boundaries between public and private. This class will scrutinize the court’s much criticized burqa ban ruling in 2014 in which it declared that the French 2010 law banning face-covering clothing in public spaces did not violate the right of freedom of religion as defined in the European Convention of Human Rights.</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Destination Europe – Protecting the Rights of Migrants and Refugees in European Law</td>
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<td>• Document: EU-Turkey Agreement, March 2016.</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Challenging Counter-Terrorism Measures in the European Court of Justice: EU Law and UN Law in Conflict</td>
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<td>Is EU law an integral part of international law or does it establish an independent constitutional system? Would the supremacy of EU law over international law have a disruptive effect on the latter? These questions are not only of theoretical relevance, especially in cases when EU law conflicts with international law. Such a conflict has been the focus of the Kadi case dealing with the interplay between UN law and EU law. The question was whether the implementation by the EU of a UN Security Council Resolution could be made conditional on conformity with European fundamental rights standards. The aim of this session is to show how the growing empowerment of the individual in the EU judicial system shapes and defines the place of EU law in the global world of public law.</td>
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| 10. | Midterm Exam |

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<th>11.</th>
<th>III. Creating, Expanding and Implementing Human Rights</th>
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<td>This class focuses on the rich diversity of tools and strategies human rights advocates employ to secure concrete advances in human rights. The case study</td>
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provides an in-depth look at a campaign for new global labor standards to protect the rights of tens of millions of women and girls that led to the adoption of a new international labor convention in 2011 to ensure decent work for domestic workers.


In an age of globalization, the question of how to protect human rights against corporate-related harm has gained increasing attention. For years, human rights groups and businesses were unable to find common ground. But in 2011 the Human Rights Council unanimously endorsed a set of Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights that UN Special Representative John G. Ruggie had developed, with the support of business associations, individual firms as well as labor organizations. Companies have begun to align with them and advocacy groups use them in their campaigning work. In this session, we will analyze how it was possible that these landmark “Ruggie Rules” came to exist.


### 13. Securing the Individual in World Society: Humanitarian Intervention and the Responsibility to Protect

The R2P entails two distinct but complementary norms. The first norm holds that each state has a responsibility to protect its population from atrocity crimes. The second norm, which is more controversial, holds that the international community has the responsibility to do what it can to ensure that populations are protected from atrocity crimes. This norm is understood to involve, if necessary, taking collective action under Chapter VII of the UN Charter should states fail to protect their populations. Although the concrete impact of the R2P is contested, this class will examine how various actors like the International Court of Justice and the International Law Commission worked towards the gradual development of legal duties for the extraterritorial protection of populations.

## 14. Global Justice: Prosecuting Genocide, Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes

This class will start with a basic overview of the genealogy of transitional justice in world society leading to the creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Analytically we will focus on several problems related to the prosecution of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) provides a very good example to study the challenges of implementation, the potential for cooperation with local courts as well as the question of political legitimacy in view of different or conflicting understandings of justice between and within global and local contexts.

### References


## 15. IV. Global Transformations: Perspectives on Law, Politics, and the Global Economy

### Human Rights and National Sovereignty: Redefining Legitimate Political Authority in World Society

In this session, we will analyze how the discourse and practice of human rights is redefining legitimate political authority in the international system. Some theorists and legal scholars argue that the concept of state sovereignty is shifting from one of impunity to one of responsibility and accountability. Jean L. Cohen, for example, offers a stimulating theory of a dualistic world order comprised of an international society of states, and a global political community in which human rights and global governance institutions affect the law, policies, and political culture of sovereign states.

### References


In this class, students will be confronted with an internal critique of contemporary humanitarianism. The increasing...
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<td>marketization of traditional humanitarianism is leading to a new form of ‘humanitarian business’ in which aid agencies pursue branding in a competition for ‘scarce’ resources. The global political economy puts aid agencies side-by-side with for-profit business in a marketplace that is, unfortunately, also connected to trade networks in illicit arms, natural resources, and drugs.</td>
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| 17. | **Left Behind: Poverty, Inequality and the Limits of International Human Rights Law**  
In today’s world society millions lack access to clean water, basic shelter, food or healthcare. However, poverty and inequality used to be treated with less urgency than violations of civil and political rights. In this class, we will discuss whether the problem of global material inequality should matter more to international human rights law. Or, to put it differently, should the problem of poverty and inequality be articulated within or rather outside of the framework of human rights law and what might be the potential shortcomings of framing socio-economic rights in the language of contemporary human rights? |   |
|   |   |   |
| 18. | **A Journey into the Unknown? The End of Western Hegemony and the Uncertain Future of Human Rights in a Multipolar World**  
In this final session, we will discuss Stephen Hopgood’s provocative thesis that we are currently entering a Neo-Westphalian international (dis)order. This new type of order is characterized by the resurgence of national sovereignty, geopolitical conflicts, resurgent religion as well as by the decay of universal human rights. According to Hopgood, no hegemonic power will be able to globalize human rights effectively in this new global configuration of multiple regional centers. Thus, the meaning of human rights and the very idea of a unified international human rights movement might be replaced by a plurality of competing actors and forces in the foreseeable future. |   |
|   |   |   |
FIELD STUDIES:
- 3 sets of course related excursion as part of the EU Program (Berlin & Prague; European institutions in Frankfurt, Luxembourg, Strasbourg and Brussels; “ EU Member States”, i.e. UK, Sweden, Baltics; Italy and Spain; or Hungary, Romania, Greece”
- European Court on Human Rights, Strasbourg
- UNOG – United Nations Office Geneva and related institutions

REQUIRED READINGS:
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)
- European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)

**RECOMMENDED READINGS:**


• Moyn, Samuel (2014) ‘From Communist to Muslim: European Human Rights, the Cold War, and Religious Liberty’, *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 113: 1, pp. 63-86.


• Türk, Volker, Alice Edwards, Cornelis Wouters (eds.) (2017) *In Flight from Conflict and Violence. UNHCR’s Consultations on Refugee Status and Other Forms of International Protection*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.


*See also:*


