Course description and objectives

International human rights have become an important area of academic study for about three decades now. Human rights remained one of the major points of reference in public policy discourse at local, regional and global levels. Nevertheless, the question of human rights remains central to the quest for freedom, peace and justice in different parts of the world. The course will examine the conceptual underpinnings of international human rights. It will help identify and discuss various perspectives on human rights, instruments, institutions, mechanisms and procedures. In pursuing the objectives, the course enables students in exploring the most recent developments in the field and suggests approaches towards a better protection of human rights.

By the end of the course it is expected that the course participants will be able to

1. understand the concept of international human rights- institutions, mechanisms and procedures
2. be aware of the practices and the gaps in the protection of human rights in different contexts
3. identify challenges to the protection of human rights worldwide, explore forms of responses to human rights violations, and
4. Evaluate and reflect on the efficacy of the discourses of international human rights.

Required Reading


Course requirement, evaluation and grading

Assessment of learning outcomes follow the applicable University rules and regulations. Regular class attendance, active participation in class, doing individual assignments and submitting them per the deadlines, adequate contribution to group assignments and presentations, regular reading of course materials and the final examination are the basis of evaluation. While the University’s system/scale will be used as a guideline to convert student’s results into grades, the overall evaluation will take
into consideration the standings of individual results as well as the overall performance of the class. Individual assignments-term papers are assessed on the basis of adequate discussion of the issue or the question the topic raises, originality in analysis, organization of ideas and clarity of presentation of the written submission, use of sources including citations and referencing. The values of each of the items of evaluation are as follow:

Class participation and presentations (30%) Includes group presentations
Individual Assignments (20%) Term paper
Final Exam (50%) End of Semester

The course requires regular class attendance and students benefit from active class participation. Students should submit assignments on the designated dates and delays may lead to reduction of points. Course evaluation and final grades will be based on the successful completion of the activities and requirements outlined above. Students are also encouraged to use consultation hours for additional questions and discussions.

Disabilities

In case of disability adversely affecting your academic performance, we will work to ensure access to the course materials and I will provide full support and make amendments per the applicable rules.

Course outline and activity schedules

1. Discussion of items in the syllabus and course introduction
2. Introduction to international human rights/IHR, concepts and definition(s)


3. Historical development of the discourse of international human rights, emphasis on period since 1945; * Presentations

Read Nona Smith pp 5-23.


4. Theories of human rights; *presentations

* refers to a group presentation of assignments
Jack Donnelly, 1998 (2nd Ed), *International Human Rights: Dilemmas in World Politics*, Westview Press, pp 18-32 (printed version of chapter will be provided)


5. The concept of sources and categories of rights (21 & 23 Feb) & presentations

Rona Smith pp 38-49

*International Bill of Human Rights- UDHR, ICCPR, ICESCR, and CAT etc*

http://www.ohchr.org

6. Institutions, procedures, mechanisms, UN (13 March) & presentations

Rona Smith pp 52-82

Thomas Buergental, ‘The UN Human Rights Committee pp 341-398’


7. Institutions, procedures, mechanisms- AU, OAS, Council of Europe; presentations

Rona Smith Chapters 7, 8, 9


www.jstor.org/stable/4149821

8. Human rights and domestic legal systems (Examples from the US & Ethiopia); presentations


9. Human rights and foreign policies of states *presentations*


10. Forms of responses to human rights violations;*presentations*


11. New Institutions & Mechanisms: the UN Human Rights Council and the ICC; *presentations*


[http://www.corteidh.or.cr/tablas/r26991.pdf](http://www.corteidh.or.cr/tablas/r26991.pdf)

Leslie Finjamuri, 2016, ‘The International Criminal Court and the Paradox of Authority’

[http://scholarship.law.duke.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4774&context=lcp](http://scholarship.law.duke.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4774&context=lcp)

12. Beyond the responsibility to protect: human dignity, freedom and solidarity;* Presentations*

Useful Links for additional information

2. Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (http://www.oas.org/en)
3. The Council of Europe (http://www.coe.int)
4. European Court of Human Rights (http://www.echr.coe.int/ECHR/homepage_en)
5. African Court on Human and Peoples Rights (www.african-court.org/en/)
6. Human Rights Library University of Minnesota (http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/)
7. U.S. Department of State (Human Rights Reports) (http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/)
8. Amnesty International (www.amnesty.org.uk)
9. Human Rights Watch (www.hrw.org)

Academic Honesty

Adhering to rules of academic honesty and familiarity with the University’s Student Conduct Code is expected from every student. Plagiarism—presenting other person’s work as one’s own—is a serious academic offence resulting in the nullification or reduction of the results of the assignment and may lead to disciplinary measures by the University.

Note: The reading materials are selected in a way they help students become familiar with the various literatures on international human rights. Presentation and topics for individual papers will be assigned in consultation with the students. This syllabus provides information and guidance about the course and may be subject to some modifications.