



Political Science/International Studies 434: The Politics of Human Rights
Summer 2023
Online

Instructor

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Office Hours: Online
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Course format

All content for this course is fully **asynchronous** (i.e., not conducted in real time). Materials for each week will be available on Canvas by the beginning of the relevant week.

Instructor Office Hours

Due to the small class size, office hours will be held by appointment. My schedule is flexible this summer and I am generally available. Please email me with 2-3 potential times to meet and I will email you to confirm and include a zoom link. I'm usually quite flexible and am *always* happy to meet!

Class Description

This class will cover the major issues and questions surrounding human rights. Human rights constitute a fundamental normative ideal for our contemporary world. A relatively new phenomenon in international affairs, governments have committed themselves to an unprecedented legal framework in the post-World War II era. And yet, the promotion and protection of human rights is often controversial, unstable and always political. Together, we will investigate the central actors, mechanisms and efficacy of the international human rights regime.

The course is split into three broad categories with their own main topics and questions, although there is significant overlap across categories. **Weeks 1-3** will cover the "Structures of Human Rights," and outline the concepts, history and international institutions that have led to the contemporary human rights system. What are human rights? What are the principal international human rights treaties? Are these treaties effective? **Weeks 4-6** will cover "Human Rights Practice" and show how the prior legal framework is enforced. What are the different types of human rights activism, and are they effective? Under what conditions do human rights violations justify humanitarian intervention? Does the International Criminal Court and other post-atrocity justice systems promote or inhibit human rights protection? **The final two weeks** will emphasize proactive student engagement in the context of foreign policy and human rights diplomacy. Here, we will simulate the crafting of human rights policy as it could be created in the real world. Is American leadership necessary to uphold human rights globally? What considerations do U.S. policymakers think about when crafting human rights policy?

Course Learning Outcomes

- Understand important human rights concepts and theories
- Understand the origins and political history of human rights, particularly in the 20th and 21st centuries
- Understand the variety of institutions, practices, and policies that are used to protect human rights
- Question the efficacy of different human rights institutions and policies
- Understand the decision-making behind human rights institutions and policies
- Develop strong research and writing skills, particularly the ability to make a clear and concise argument
- Develop independent time-management and planning skills

Credit Hours

This is a four credit-hour course held during the 8-week summer term. However, the amount of content is comparable to a normal-semester long course. This class therefore meets for a total of 8 class period hours – 6 hours of lecture and an two hours of discussion board activities – each week over the spring semester and carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading, writing, problem sets, studying, etc.) for about 4 hours out of classroom for every class period.

Required Texts

Scott Straus, *Fundamentals of Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention* (Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2016).

The hard copy is available through amazon.com; electronically, it may be downloaded (for free) at <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/reports-and-resources/fundamentals-of-genocide-and-mass-atrocity-prevention#:~:text=Fundamentals%20of%20Genocide%20and%20Mass%20Atrocity%20Prevention%2C%20a%20new%20atrocity,genocide%20and%20mass%20atrocities%20worldwide>. Do let me know if you have trouble attaining a copy.

In addition, there will be a number of articles and chapters assigned that are available online on the course Canvas site. Each week also lists several “recommended readings.” These are not required, but they will be uploaded on the Canvas site if you are interested in learning more about a certain topic.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Quizzes: There will be 7 quizzes that cover the course content for that week (Weeks 1-7). In each quiz, there will be 10 questions that are either multiple choice or true/false. Quizzes will be opened Wednesday and due each Saturday at 11:59pm. 20% total.

Discussion posts: Weekly discussion posts are required to critically engage with the course content. I will provide a discussion prompt at the beginning of each week. **You will respond to this prompt with an original answer of about 150-250 words each week. These will be due by Wednesday at 11:59pm.** You will then have the opportunity to directly engage with the answers of your peers. These responses can (respectfully) contest a previous response or extend an idea further. These second responses may also engage with the group's discussion as a whole. At times, I may intervene and

provide a second prompt based on your initial responses. In short, the precise engagement can vary; the goal is to critically engage both the course content and the ideas of your peers. **These "peer responses" will also be about 150-250 words and be submitted Saturday at 11:59pm.** In total, you will complete 14 discussion posts (7 "prompt responses" and 7 "peer responses"). 20% total.

Short assignments: In order to further explore the empirical world of human rights, there will be 2 short assignments that ask you to investigate an element of human rights practice and policy. These are graded on a completion basis; following the prompt correctly will ensure you receive full credit. 10% total.

Project: Protecting Human Rights and Crafting American Foreign Policy: While the above assignments entail a more "week-by-week" approach to assessment, the second portion of assignments will revolve around a thematic project where you will role-play as various actors involved in crafting human rights policy and action. Here, you will not only improve your research and writing skills, but also learn the complexities and considerations that go into crafting an effective human rights policy and the difficulties that policymakers face. Each subsequent assignment (listed below) will build off from each other.

- NGO Report: You will take the role of an employee at a nongovernmental organization (NGO) tasked with documenting and advocating for the human rights situation in a particular country. You will select a country and carefully research the human rights environment, writing a 7-10 page report detailing the situation and advocating for a particular policy response from the international community. 30% total.
- Foreign Service Officer Memo: You will take the role of a Foreign Service Officer in the U.S. State Department and be assigned a peer's NGO report (see above) to review. After reading the report, you will write a 3 page memo evaluating the proposed response and recommending policy options to the U.S. government. 15% total.
- National Security Council Simulation: For the final week of the course, you will take on the role of an official serving on the U.S. National Security Council during a special session to discuss human rights interventions around the world. You will read your peers' NGO reports and FSO memos on given countries and then discuss policy options in your Canvas discussion groups. 5% total.

Your class performance will be based on the following:

Discussion posts	20%
Quizzes	20%
Short assignments	10%
NGO report (research paper)	30%
Foreign Service Officer Memo	15%
National Security Council Simulation	5%

The grade scale is set at: 93+ = A; 87-92 = AB; 83-86 = B; 77-83 = BC; etc.

Cheating and plagiarism are very serious offenses that will not be tolerated in the course. You will receive a failing grade for the class, and the reason for the grade will be noted in your transcript.

Accommodation for Disabilities and Emergencies

For anyone who needs accommodations for a documented disability, please let me know *as soon as possible*. I am happy to work through the McBurney Disability Resource Center, 905 University Avenue, 263-2741. Please contact them regarding this class and we can work out the nature of the accommodations that will be needed. All discussions will remain confidential.

If you know that you will be absent from class participation for religious or other permissible reasons that can be known in advance, please let me know. If you have to miss a deadline due to sickness or family emergencies, please keep me as informed as soon as possible. We can work together to make sure you do not fall behind.

Health, well-being, and basic needs

If you are struggling, or if something happens in your life that affects what you do in this course, please let me know as soon as possible. I am here to provide what help that I can.

- As a student at this institution, you have access to free mental health counseling through University Health Services (UHS). Crisis services are available 24/7 at 608-265-5600 (option 9). If you feel comfortable speaking with us (or having your health care provider do so), we are happy to discuss ways to succeed in this course.
- You should know that I am a mandatory reporter under Title IX, the federal law prohibiting sex discrimination in U.S. schools. This means that if you disclose to me that you have experienced sexual harassment or assault, I am legally required to tell the Dean of Students office. UHS is a confidential reporting space should you ever need it; you can reach them at survivor.services@uhs.wisc.edu or via phone at 608-265-5600 (option 3).
- Your safety and well-being is more important than anything going on in this class. Any student facing challenges securing food or housing or personal safety is urged to contact the Dean of Students Office (<https://doso.students.wisc.edu/contact-us/>).

COVID-19

The University no longer provides recommended language related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Please visit <https://covidresponse.wisc.edu/> for the most recent and accurate University information.

PRIVACY OF STUDENT RECORDS and the USAGE of AUDIO RECORDED LECTURES

See information about [privacy of student records and the usage of audio-recorded lectures](#).

Usage of Audio Recorded Lectures Statement

Lecture materials and recordings for PS 434 are protected intellectual property at UW-Madison. Students in this course may use the materials and recordings for their personal use related to participation in this class. Students may also take notes solely for their personal use. If a lecture is not already recorded, you are not authorized to record my lectures without my permission unless you are considered by the university to be a qualified student with a disability requiring accommodation. [Regent Policy Document 4-1] Students may not copy or have lecture materials

and recordings outside of class, including posting on internet sites or selling to commercial entities. Students are also prohibited from providing or selling their personal notes to anyone else or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the instructor's express written permission. Unauthorized use of these copyrighted lecture materials and recordings constitutes copyright infringement and may be addressed under the university's policies, UWS Chapters 14 and 17, governing student academic and non-academic misconduct.

Course Pacing

Given the online and asynchronous delivery of the course, I thought it might be helpful to outline what a typical week of work should look like for the course.

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Overview	View course assignments & review any assignments due that week						
Readings	Complete all readings						
Lecture	Watch lecture videos and take notes						
Discussion		Post response to discussion prompt			Respond to peer's prompt		
Quiz				Quiz opens Wednesday Quiz due Saturday 11:59pm			
Assignments	Work on the various course assignments on your own time; just don't procrastinate!						

Course Outline

Week 1: The Fundamentals and Political Origins of Human Rights (June 19 - June 24)

Lecture 1: Introduction and Central Questions

Lecture 2: What are Human Rights?

Lecture 3: Theories of Human Rights

Lecture 4: Toward the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Readings for Week 1:

- Review the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>
- Stern, Steve J., and Scott Straus. 2014. "Introduction: Embracing Paradox Human Rights in the Global Age" *The Human Rights Paradox: Universality and its Discontents*. *University of Wisconsin Press*
- Sikkink, Kathryn. 2017. *Evidence for Hope*. Chapter 3.
- Hakim, Neema. 2021. "Do Not Trust Facebook to Enforce Human Rights." *OpinioJuris* at <http://opiniojuris.org/2021/03/22/do-not-trust-facebook-to-enforce-human-rights/>
- Hafner-Burton, Emilie M., and Kiyoteru Tsutsui. 2005. "Human rights in a globalizing world: The paradox of empty promises." *American journal of sociology*. 110.5: 1373-1411.

Recommended readings:

- Sikkink, Kathryn. 2017. *Evidence for Hope*. Chapter 4.
- Wright, Lawrence. 2022. "The Elephant in the Courtroom: A curious legal crusade to redefine personhood is raising profound questions about the interdependence of the animal and human kingdoms." *The New Yorker*

Week 2: International Human Rights Law (June 25 - July 1)

Lecture 5: Fundamentals of International Law

Lecture 6: The International Bill of Human Rights

Lecture 7: Other Human Rights Treaties

Lecture 8: The Efficacy of International Human Rights Law

Readings for Week 2:

- Englehart, Neil A., and Melissa K. Miller. "The CEDAW effect: international law's impact on women's rights." *Journal of Human Rights* 13.1 (2014): 22-47.
- Comstock, Audrey L. 2022 "Negotiated rights: UN treaty negotiation, socialization, and human rights." *Journal of Human Rights*: 1-22.
- Búzás, Zoltán I. 2018. "Is the Good News About Law Compliance Good News About Norm Compliance? The Case of Racial Equality." *International Organization* 72.2: 351-385.
- Have Human Rights Treaties Failed?:
<https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2014/12/28/have-human-rights-treaties-failed>

Recommended readings:

- Whelan, Daniel J., and Jack Donnelly. 2007. "The West, economic and social rights, and the global human rights regime: setting the record straight." *Human Rights Quarterly*: 908-949.

SHORT ASSIGNMENT (due July 1 at 11:59pm)

Week 3: Developments in International Human Rights Law (July 2 - July 8)

Lecture 9: Regional Approaches to Human Rights

Lecture 10: The Universal Periodic Review

Lecture 11: Protections for Asylum-seekers and Refugees

Readings for Week 3:

- Hillebrecht, Courtney. 2012 "The domestic mechanisms of compliance with international human rights law: case studies from the Inter-American Human Rights System." *Human Rights Quarterly* 34: 959.
- Terman, Rochelle, and Erik Voeten. 2018. "The relational politics of shame: Evidence from the universal periodic review." *The Review of International Organizations* 13.1: 1-23.
- Terman, Rochelle, and Zoltán I. Búzás. 2021. "A House Divided: Norm Fragmentation in the International Human Rights Regime." *International Studies Quarterly* 65.2: 488-499.
- Carraro, Valentina. 2019. "Promoting compliance with human rights: the performance of the United Nations' Universal Periodic Review and Treaty Bodies." *International Studies Quarterly* 63.4: 1079-1093.

Recommended readings:

- Hillebrecht, Courtney. 2014. "The power of human rights tribunals: Compliance with the European Court of Human Rights and domestic policy change." *European Journal of International Relations* 20.4: 1100-1123.
- DeMeritt, Jacqueline HR, and Courtenay R. Conrad. 2019. "Repression substitution: Shifting human rights violations in response to UN naming and shaming." *Civil Wars* 21.1: 128-152.
- Carraro, Valentina. 2017. "The United Nations treaty bodies and Universal Periodic Review: Advancing human rights by preventing politicization." *Human Rights Quarterly* 39: 943.

SHORT ASSIGNMENT (due July 8 at 11:59pm)

Week 4: Human Rights Activism (July 9 - July 15)

Lecture 12: Human Rights Activism

Lecture 13: Transnational Advocacy Networks and the Boomerang Model

Lecture 14: Examples of Human Rights Activism

Readings for Week 5:

- Sikkink, Kathryn. 2017. *Evidence for Hope*. Chapter 5.
- Bakke, Kristin M., Neil J. Mitchell, and Hannah M. Smidt. 2020. "When states crack down on human rights defenders." *International Studies Quarterly* 64.1: 85-96.
- Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink. 1998. *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. Cornell: Cornell University Press. pp. 1-38.
- Allendoerfer, Michelle Giacobbe, Amanda Murdie, and Ryan M. Welch. 2020. "The Path of the Boomerang: Human Rights Campaigns, Third-Party Pressure, and Human Rights." *International Studies Quarterly* 64.1: 111-119.

Recommended readings:

- Sikkink, Kathryn. 2017. *Evidence for Hope*. Chapter 6.
- Roth, Kenneth. 2014. "The End of Human Rights?." *The New York Review of Books*

NGO REPORT PROMPT RELEASED (due July 29 at 11:59 pm)

Week 5: Atrocity Prevention, Humanitarian Intervention, and Genocide (July 16 - July 22)

Lecture 15: Humanitarian Intervention

Lecture 16: Mass Atrocity and Genocide Prevention

Lecture 17: Examples of Success and Failure

Readings for Week 5:

- Straus, Scott. 2016. *Fundamentals of Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention*, Introduction & Chapters 5-8.
- Power, Samantha. 2001. "Bystanders to Genocide: Why the United States Let the Rwanda Tragedy Happen." *The Atlantic Monthly*.

Recommended readings:

- Lizotte, M. K. 2021. The gender gap in support for humanitarian interventions. *Journal of Human Rights*, 20 (1), 20-35.

Week 6: Justice After Atrocity (July 23 - July 29)

Lecture 18: International Criminal Law and Domestic Courts

Lecture 19: The International Criminal Court

Lecture 20: Transitional Justice

Readings this Week 6:

- Straus, *Fundamentals of Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention*, Chapters 9 & 10.
- Prorok, Alyssa K. 2017. "The (in) compatibility of peace and justice? The International Criminal Court and civil conflict termination." *International organization* 71, no. 2: 213-243.
- Bates, Genevieve. 2021. "Threats and Commitments: International Tribunals and Domestic Trials in Peace Negotiations." *Working Paper*
- Zvobgo, Kelebogile. 2020). Demanding truth: The global transitional justice network and the creation of truth commissions. *International Studies Quarterly* 64(3), 609-625.

Recommended readings:

- Zvobgo, Kelebogile. 2019. "Designing truth: Facilitating perpetrator testimony at truth commissions." *Journal of Human Rights* 18.1: 92-110.

NGO REPORT DUE (*July 29 @ 11:59 pm*)

Week 7: (American) Foreign Policy and Human Rights (July 30 - August 5)

Lecture 21: Human Rights and Foreign Policy

Lecture 22: U.S. Foreign Policy and Human Rights

Lecture 23: The War on Terror and Human Rights

Readings for Week 7:

- Myrick, Rachel, and Jeremy M. Weinstein. 2022. "Making Sense of Human Rights Diplomacy: Evidence from a US Campaign to Free Political Prisoners." *International Organization*: 1-35.
- Pevehouse, Jon CW, and Felicity Vabulas. 2019. "Nudging the Needle: Foreign Lobbies and US Human Rights Ratings." *International Studies Quarterly* 63, no. 1: 85-98.
- Mills, Kurt, and Rodger A. Payne. 2020. "America First and the human rights regime." *Journal of Human Rights* 19, no. 4: 399-424.

Recommended readings:

- Cordell, Rebecca, K. Chad Clay, Christopher J. Fariss, Reed M. Wood, and Thorin M. Wright. 2020. "Changing standards or political whim? Evaluating changes in the content of US State Department Human Rights Reports following presidential transitions." *Journal of Human Rights* 19, no. 1: 3-18
- "Leadership Failure Firsthand Accounts of Torture of Iraqi Detainees by the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division." 2005. *Human Rights Watch*:
<https://www.hrw.org/report/2005/09/22/leadership-failure/firsthand-accounts-torture-iraqi-detainees-us-armys-82nd>

FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER MEMO DUE (*August 5 @ 11:59 pm*)

Week 8: Course Wrap-Up and National Security Council Simulation (August 6 - August 12)

Lecture 24: Human Rights and Development

Lecture 25: Human Rights and Globalization

Lecture 26: Human Rights and the Environment

Readings for Week 8:

- Read your classmates' reports and memos to prepare for the simulation

NO QUIZ THIS WEEK

NSC SIMULATION