

Human Rights

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Web: humanrights.uchicago.edu

The Human Rights Program provides College students with the opportunity to express their interest in human rights issues in courses that link academic knowledge and practice-oriented work. The connection between rigorous academic study and a commitment to human rights work, either as intern or extern, is at the core of the program. To a large extent, this combination of academic and practice-oriented work reflects the reality of student life and experience. Moreover, the combination of rigorous study and commitment to practical work also serves as a national and international model. The innovative integration of theory and practice is a unique feature of the University of Chicago's Human Rights Program, which has been widely recognized by peer institutions throughout the country. The Human Rights Program in the College is rooted in the general education mission of the University of Chicago.

Students wishing to pursue a systematic introduction to the study of human rights are encouraged to take the core sequence in Human Rights (Human Rights I: Philosophical Foundations of Human Rights; Human Rights II: Historical Underpinnings of Human Rights; and Human Rights III: Contemporary Issues in Human Rights). This sequence serves as a general introduction to the field. Students may then take additional human rights related courses cross listed with other disciplines. These courses provide an in-depth study of various human rights issues from a number of different theoretical perspectives.

Participation in an internship in human rights or, alternatively, in volunteer work on human rights related issues is also recommended. The program itself awards fellowships each year to support such endeavors. The program coordinator, in consultation with the director of the human rights program, is responsible for assisting students interested in finding internship and voluntary work. Applications are due in Autumn Quarter.

Students interested in human rights are also encouraged to attend the human rights workshop series where both academic and practice-oriented aspects of human rights work will be discussed. Directed by the post-doctoral fellow for human rights, workshops are offered every quarter and present the work of University graduate students and practitioners. College students may wish to participate in the Ignacio Martin-Baro Human Rights Essay Prize Contest conducted every Spring Quarter. Finally, students are invited to attend the annual human rights spring conference to learn more about theoretical and practice-oriented topics in human rights.

Faculty

C. Breckenridge, D. Brudney, A. Chase, M. Carneiro da Cunha, A. Feldmann, A. Gewirth, M. E. Geyer, M. Green, S. Gzesh, H. Joas, M. Ngai, W. Novak, M. Nussbaum, E. Povinelli, R. Shweder, A. Stanley, T. Steck, G. Stone, C. Vogler, I. Young

Courses: Human Rights (HMRT)

The Human Rights Program prepares both annual and quarterly lists of qualifying courses that are available in P 122 and on the following Web site: humanrights.uchicago.edu.

Human Rights Core Sequence

20100/30100. Human Rights I: Philosophical Foundations of Human Rights. (=HIST 29301/39301, INRE 31600, ISHU 28700/38700, LAWS 41200, LLSO 25100, MAPH 40000, PHIL 21700/31600) This course deals with the philosophical foundations of human rights. The foundations bear on basic conceptual and normative issues. We examine the various meanings and components of human rights and the subjects, objects, and respondents of human rights. We ask questions such as: Who has the rights? What they are rights to? Who has the correlative duties? Can we legitimately hold the members of other societies to the standards of our culture? What methods of argument and implementation are available in this area? The practical implications of these theoretical issues are also explored. *M. Green. Autumn.*

20200/30200. Human Rights II: History and Theory of Human Rights. (=HIST 29302/39302, INRE 39400, ISHU 28800/38800, LAWS 41301, LLSO 27100) This lecture course is concerned with the history and theory of the modern human rights regime. It sets out to answer some simple question: Why should anyone want or need human rights? Why did certain nations in the eighteenth century and the community of states in the twentieth century find it necessary to institute regimes of human rights? Along the way, we explore the similarities and differences between natural law, human rights, civil rights, and humanitarian law. In contrast to triumphalist accounts that speak of an “age of rights,” we are concerned with the tenuous nature of human and, for that matter, civil rights regimes. We wonder what happens in times and in situations when there are no human rights to speak of or when rights are gerrymandered to fit prevailing political and cultural conditions. *M. Geyer. Winter.*

20300/30300. Human Rights III: Contemporary Issues in Human Rights. (=HIST 29303/39303, INRE 57900, ISHU 28900/38900, LAWS 57900, PATH 46500) This course examines the main features of the contemporary human rights system. It covers the major international treaties, and the mechanism, international, regional and national, established to implement them. We also discuss the uses and limitations of the international treaty system, and the relationship between international obligations and domestic implementation. Legal and medical concepts are applied to topics such as torture, political repression, war crimes and genocide, refugees, women’s rights, children’s rights, violations of human rights within the United States, and medical ethics. *S. Gzesh. Spring.*

20500/30500. Human Rights and International Relations. It is only in the twentieth century that a human rights regime central to the practice of international politics has emerged. Out of the devastating experience of World War II and the Holocaust, human rights has become a critical part of the contemporary world's international relations. Sometimes ignored by academics, it is nonetheless a tangible part of global politics and its reality must be confronted. This course is designed to provide an overview of issues central to the theory and practice of human rights in international relations. We debate such current issues as interventions; sanctions; war crimes; economic rights versus political rights; and if human rights should be part of foreign policy considerations or if, in fact, the concept of human rights is mere rhetorical nonsense. *A. Feldmann. Autumn.*

21200/31200. Armed Conflict and the Politics of Humanitarian Action. This course attempts to enhance the understanding of the conditions that have historically fueled internal violence and civil wars. Beyond merely analyzing the economic, social, and political conditions prompting armed conflict, we review some of the societal consequences this phenomenon brings about (in particular, massive population uprooting). At the same time, we examine the characteristics and complexities of humanitarian work aimed at alleviating the suffering of victims of armed conflict and situations of generalized violence. *A. Feldmann. Winter.*

21300/31300. Human Rights in Latin America. This course uses a historical perspective to critically examine the state of human rights in Latin American countries. By reviewing different rights (e.g., the right to life, physical integrity, discrimination) in several Latin American countries, the course endeavors to show the evolution of human rights in the region and, more broadly, illustrate how human rights have progressed and diversified over time. By looking into the general conditions prompting human rights violations in specific places, the course also seeks to help students familiarize themselves with the main social, economic, cultural, and political problems affecting Latin America. *A. Feldmann. Spring.*

22300. Human Rights in Prisons. This course explores the social, political, legal, and economic effects of prisons in the United States and in other countries. We study the rulings of the U.S. Supreme Court on prisoner rights, the growing use of special maximum security prisons and prison units, and the special problems of women and juveniles in prison. The course also includes readings and discussion on the issue of political prisoners in the U.S. and abroad, as well as strategies for developing rehabilitation programs inside prisons and for recently released prisoners. *M. Deutsch. Spring.*

25200. Sexuality and Human Rights. This course explores the burgeoning awareness of gender and sexuality in international human rights protection focusing on topics such as sexual orientation, culture and rights, non-discrimination and HIV/AIDS, violence, discrimination in employment, migration and mobility, and sex workers. This course takes an interdisciplinary approach, examining sexuality and human rights from the perspectives of the social sciences, law, media, literature, and the humanities. *S. Lyke. Autumn.*

25300. The French Revolution and Human Rights. This course examines a foundational event in the history of human rights: the French Revolution. We appraise how notions of rights and universality shaped the Revolution and how, in return, the Revolution shaped contemporary understandings of those concepts. As such, the course comprises both historical analysis and theoretical reflection. *E. Saadia. Winter.*

25400. Human Rights in Asia and the Pacific. This course introduces the theory and practice of human rights in Asia and the Pacific. We explore the religious and philosophical foundations of human rights, historical events that led to a call for recognition of “human rights,” the development of international human rights standards and laws (with particular attention to the ongoing debate over the “universality” of human rights versus Asian-values), the role played by governments and nongovernmental organizations in the promotion and protection of human rights, and some selected case studies of current human rights situations. *D. Chen. Spring.*