

**SIS 622 – Human Rights**  
**Fall 2018**  
**SIS 333**  
**Thursday 5:30-8:00**

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Office Hours: Mondays 11:00-1:00; Thursdays 3:00-5:00; and by appointment



**Course Description:**

This course explains the main principles of international human rights law and provides a solid grounding in the main United Nations and regional systems for human rights protection and promotion. In addition, students are introduced to the methodology of human rights fact-finding, including interview techniques and planning investigations. The course also considers the political, sociological, and ethical dimensions of human rights advocacy. Students consider the ways in which human rights address human society and how we treat one another, how authority is used, and issues of basic justice and fairness.

**Course Goals**

1. Gain familiarity with human rights law
2. Engage with historical and present-day debates in human rights
3. Learn to measure and communicate human rights issues
4. Learn to evaluate a human rights issue from multiple perspectives

**Means for Achieving Course Goals**

1. Analysis and application of human rights and humanitarian legal documents
2. In-class facilitation, discussion, and debate
3. Assessment of media coverage of human rights and creation of media content
4. Completion of a human rights policy analysis

**Required Texts:**

1. Samuel Moyn, *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2018)
2. Sally Engle Merry, *Human Rights and Gender Violence: Translating Law into Local Justice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press)
3. Alexandra Zanthaki, *Indigenous Rights and United Nations Standards: Self-Determination, Culture and Land* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)
4. Scott Straus, *Fundamentals of Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention* (Washington: USHMM, 2016)
5. Jens David Ohlin, *Theoretical Boundaries of Armed Conflict and Human Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016)
6. Rosalind Shaw, Lars Waldorf, and Pierre Hazan, *Localizing Transitional Justice: Interventions and Priorities after Mass Violence* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2010)
7. Stephen Humphreys, *Human Rights and Climate Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

### **Supplemental Readings:**

Readings that complement the required texts will be assigned at different times throughout the semester and are available on Blackboard.

### **Grading/Assignments (See Blackboard for descriptions):**

- Class Participation: 10%
- Human Rights Treaty Analysis and Application 30%
- Op-Ed/Blog Post 30%
- Human Rights Policy Analysis/Memo/Campaign 30%

### **Safe and Inclusive Classroom Statement**

- As a community, in this classroom and at American University, we value diversity and inclusion, and aim to foster a safe and supportive environment for our students. The classroom environment should be especially conducive to the productive exchange of ideas.
- Topics may arise in class readings and discussion that may be sensitive to some class participants, including but not limited to issues of race, gender, sexuality, and ideology. In the interest of promoting the wellness of all students in the class, I will do my best to present "trigger warnings" for such content, and students should take due measures to protect their own sense of safety and wellness in the case of acute sensitivities.
- To facilitate our communication, if there is a particular name and/or pronoun you would like used, please let me know what it is and what pronoun you prefer.

### **Green Teaching**

This is a Certified Green Course. This means, for example, that I will not hand out any printed materials, but I will use Blackboard extensively to post handouts, collect assignments, and provide you with feedback on assignments. To help make our class as green as possible, I encourage you to buy used books, minimize paper use by submitting assignments electronically as instructed, and read course readings online rather than printing copies. If you choose to print, please print double-sided, and recycle the paper after the end of the semester.

### **Academic Integrity Code:**

Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University's Academic Integrity Code. By registering, you have acknowledged your awareness of the Academic Integrity Code, and you are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary actions will be taken should such violations occur. Please see me if you have any questions about the academic violations described in the Code in general or as they relate to particular requirements for this course.

### **Sharing of Course Content:**

Students are not permitted to make visual or audio recordings, including live streaming, of classroom lectures or any class related content, using any type of recording devices (e.g., smart phone, computer, digital recorder, etc.) unless prior permission from the instructor is obtained and there are no objections from any of the students in the class. If permission is granted, personal use and sharing of recordings and any electronic copies of course materials (e.g., PowerPoints, formulas, lecture notes and any classroom discussions online or otherwise) is limited to the personal use of students registered in the course and for educational purposes only, even after the end of the course.

Exceptions will be made for students who present a signed Letter of Accommodation from the Academic Support and Access Center. See: <http://www.american.edu/ocl/asac/Accommodations.cfm>. To supplement the classroom experience, lectures may be audio or video recorded by faculty and made available to students registered for this class. Faculty may record classroom lectures or discussions for pedagogical use, future

student reference, or to meet the accommodation needs of students with a documented disability. These recordings are limited to personal use and may not be distributed (fileshare), sold, or posted on social media outlets without the written permission of faculty. Unauthorized downloading, file sharing, distribution of any part of a recorded lecture or course materials, or using information for purposes other than the student's own learning may be deemed a violation of *American University's Student Conduct Code* and subject to disciplinary action (see Student Conduct Code VI. Prohibited Conduct).

### **Emergency Preparedness for Interruption of Classes:**

In the event of an emergency, American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of an emergency, students should refer to the AU Student Portal, the AU Web site ([www.prepared.american.edu](http://www.prepared.american.edu)) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean's office for course and school/ college-specific information.

### **Early Warning Notices:**

Undergraduate students may receive Early Warning Notices within the first month of classes. These notices are designed for you to contact your faculty, receive assistance, and develop strategies to improve your performance in the class. Please note that you should seek help throughout the semester when you have questions, fail to submit an assignment, fail to attend class, or receive an unsatisfactory grade.

### **Course Policies:**

- Laptops are allowed in class. Students using laptops for purposes other than those related to class will lose this privilege. PowerPoint presentations used in class will be available on blackboard.
- Students are expected to attend class regularly. Excessive absences (three or more) may result in grade deductions or an "X" grade for the semester. Students with more than three absences will be asked to meet with the instructor to discuss their absences. Extensions are granted only in cases of a documented illness or special need. Late papers are docked one letter grade for every day they are late. Please refrain from texting, tweeting, and the use of any other forms of social media in class. There will be a brief break during each class period during which you will be free to do what you will.

### **Course Schedule:**

*Week One, Thursday, August 30*

- Course Introductions
  - ✓ Professor and Student Introductions
  - ✓ Course Logistics
    - Review Syllabus
    - Overview of Assignments
      - Extra emphasis on Policy Analysis/Memo/Campaign
    - Student Assignment Sign-Up

- The Four Schools of Thought on Human Rights
  - ✓ Define Each on Board: Natural, Protest, Deliberative, Discourse
  - ✓ 4 Corners: What school of thought do you most closely identify with and why?
- **Assignments:**
  - ✓ Read:
    - “Human Rights as Politics”
    - “The Relative Universality of Human Rights”
    - “The Image of the Person in the Human Rights Concept”
    - “The United Nations ICCPR: Does It Make a Difference in Human Rights Behavior?”
    - “Relativizing Human Rights”

*Week Two, September 6*

- Human Rights as Concept, Norm, and Law
- Sample Presentation: Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Human Rights in Theory and Practice
- Measuring and Monitoring Human Rights
- Sample Op-Eds: Analysis and Discussion
- **Assignments:**
  - ✓ Read:
    - *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World*

*Week Three, September 13*

- Civil and Political Rights in a Post-9/11 World
- Negative and Positive Peace: Direct and Structural Violence
- Discuss *Not Enough*
- Alston Report on Poverty in US
- Is Poverty a Crime against Humanity?
- **Assignments:**
  - ✓ ICCPR Presentation Preparation (Assigned Students)
  - ✓ Enforced Disappearances Presentation Preparation (Assigned Students)
  - ✓ Torture Convention (Assigned Students)
  - ✓ ICESCR Presentation Preparation (Assigned Students)
  - ✓ Elimination of Racial Discrimination Presentation Preparation (Assigned Students)
  - ✓ Migrant Worker Rights Presentation Preparation (Assigned Students)
  - ✓ Civil and Political Rights Op-Eds (Assigned Students)
  - ✓ Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights Op-Eds (Assigned Students)

*Week Four, September 20*

- ICCPR Presentation
- Enforced Disappearances Presentation
- Torture Convention
- ICESCR Presentation
- Elimination of Racial Discrimination Presentation
- Migrant Worker Rights Presentation

- Peer Workshop:
  - ✓ Civil and Political Rights Op-Eds
  - ✓ Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights Op-Eds
- **Assignments:**
  - ✓ Read *Human Rights and Gender Violence: Translating Law into Local Justice*
  - ✓ CEDAW Presentation Preparation (Assigned Students)
  - ✓ Rights of the Child (Assigned Students)

*Week Five, September 27*

- CEDAW Presentation
- Convention on the Rights of the Child Presentation
- Discuss *Human Rights and Gender Violence: Translating Law into Local Justice*
- **Assignments:**
  - ✓ GBV Op-Eds (Assigned Students)
  - ✓ Civil and Political Rights Policy Analysis/Memo/Campaign (Assigned Students)
  - ✓ Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights Policy Analysis/Memo/Campaign (Assigned Students)
  - ✓ Gender-Based Violence Policy Analysis/Memo/Campaign (Assigned Students)

*Week Six, October 4*

- Civil and Political Rights Policy Analysis/Memo/Campaign Informal Presentation
- Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights Policy Analysis/Memo/Campaign Informal Presentation
- Gender-Based Violence Policy Analysis/Memo/Campaign Informal Presentation
- GBV Op-Ed Peer Workshop
- **Assignments:**
  - ✓ Read: *Indigenous Rights and United Nations Standards: Self-Determination, Culture and Land* (Chapters 3-8)
  - ✓ Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Presentation Preparation (Assigned Students)

*Week Seven, October 11*

- Rights of Indigenous Peoples Presentation
- Discuss *Indigenous Rights and United Nations Standards: Self-Determination, Culture and Land*
- Settler Colonialism and Genocide
- Cultural Genocide and Indigenous Peoples
- Redress?
- **Assignments:**
  - ✓ Indigenous Rights Op-Eds (Assigned Students)
  - ✓ Indigenous Rights Policy Analysis/Memo/Campaign (Assigned Students)

*Week Eight, October 18*

- Indigenous Rights Op-Ed Peer Workshop
- Indigenous Rights Policy Analysis/Memo/Campaign Informal Presentation

- **Assignments:**
  - ✓ Read *Fundamentals of Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention*
  - ✓ Genocide Convention Presentation Preparation (Assigned Students)
  - ✓ R2P Presentation Preparation (Assigned Students)

*Week Nine, October 25*

- Genocide Convention Presentation
- R2P Presentation
- Discuss *Fundamentals of Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention*
- **Assignments:**
  - ✓ Genocide/Mass Atrocity Op-Eds (Assigned Students) for November 8
  - ✓ Genocide/Mass Atrocity Policy Analysis/Memo/Campaign (Assigned Students) for November 8

*Week Ten, November 1*

- My Genocide Research
- Special Guests: Mike Brand and Karen Mascarinas
- **Assignments:**
  - ✓ Genocide/Mass Atrocity Op-Eds (Assigned Students)
  - ✓ Genocide/Mass Atrocity Policy Analysis/Memo/Campaign (Assigned Students)

*Week Eleven, November 8*

- Genocide/Mass Atrocity Op-Ed Peer Workshop
- Genocide/Mass Atrocity Policy Analysis/Memo/Campaign Informal Presentation
- **Assignments:**
  - ✓ Read: *Theoretical Boundaries of Armed Conflict and Human Rights* (Chapters 1, 2, 5, 8, 10)

*Week Twelve, November 15*

- Discuss *Theoretical Boundaries of Armed Conflict and Human Rights*
- War, War Crimes, Crimes against Humanity, and Genocide
- Class Activity: Defining and Identifying Aggression
- **Assignments:**
  - ✓ Read *Localizing Transitional Justice: Interventions and Priorities after Mass Violence* (Chapters 1-3, 4, 8, 10-12)

*Week Thirteen, November 29*

- Approaches to Transitional Justice
- Discuss *Localizing Transitional Justice: Interventions and Priorities after Mass Violence*
- **Assignments:**
  - ✓ Read *Human Rights and Climate Change* (1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10)
  - ✓ Climate Change and Human Rights Op-Eds (Assigned Students)
  - ✓ Climate Change and Human Rights Policy Analysis/Memo/Campaign (Assigned Students)

*Week Fourteen, December 3*

- Discuss *Human Rights and Climate Change*
- Climate Change and Human Rights Op-Eds Peer Workshop
- Climate Change and Human Rights Policy Analysis/Memo/Campaign Informal Presentation