Course overview. International human rights is a powerful idea in our time, but also the focus of numerous controversies. As a body of law it is produced primarily by governments; as a body of norms, by civil society. It not only embodies a set of ideals but also functions as a political tool, which different forces try to bend to their own ends. The result of this struggle is a process of norm contestation and norm change that the course seeks to understand. The course looks at the laws and institutions that define human rights as an international regime, in the context of key intellectual controversies and political puzzles surrounding human rights theory and practice. It discusses how a variety of actors promote change and development of human rights norms. And it analyzes some of the challenges of contemporary human rights advocacy.

Requirements. The course grade will be based on two take-home examinations and two essays. The four assignments will be weighted equally in the final grade. The essays should be 5-7 pages long and may be of the following kinds:

(a) An explorations paper, which takes a look at a topic of interest to you, based on published works and/or websites. We have in mind topics which are not adequately covered in the course reading, and on which you would like more information. We want to learn what information you have gathered, but we also want to know why you think the issue is important, what conclusions you have provisionally drawn from the information you have gathered and, as appropriate, what you think are the biases or inadequacies of the sources that you used.

(b) A policy paper, which recommends a policy in some issue area or in some country for some actor (a government, NGO, multinational organization, etc.). A policy paper should be addressed to a specific actor (e.g., president, secretary of state, members of the legislature), should propose policies that are feasible for that actor, and should appeal to that actor’s motives and interests. You may wish to run your ideas past the instructor or a TF first in order to be sure that you’re addressing the various aspects that a policy paper needs to address, such as a specific policy actor, consistency with that actor’s motives, and feasibility.
(c) A critical book review. A critical essay addresses two books (or other items equivalent in length to a book) not on the course list, chosen in consultation with the instructor or TFs. Such an essay should avoid summarizing the material in the books, and should offer an independent consideration of the issues the books discuss and a critique of the authors’ analyses.

For more detailed descriptions of the three kinds of essay, please see the file “Essay types explanation.doc,” which is posted in the Shared Files section of the course website on Courseworks.

For your essays, we encourage you to use the Writing Center. Both beginning and seasoned writers do their best work when they have the chance to clarify, strengthen, and refine it with the help of perceptive readers, and a session at the Writing Center offers you that chance. You can find out more about the center and make an appointment at http://www.columbia.edu/cu/uwp/.

Due dates are as follows: first essay due September 26; midterm handed out October 10 and due October 17; second essay due November 14; final exam handed out December 10 and due December 17.

**Human Rights Advocates in residence.** As you pursue your outside projects you may wish to get in touch with some of the Human Rights Advocates who are in residence this semester at the Institute for the Study of Human Rights. For more information see http://hrcolumbia.org/hrap/.

**Readings and Materials.** The following books are available for purchase in paperback at Book Culture (536 West 112th Street). Purchase is optional.


Library copies are on reserve at the Lehman Library Reserve Desk and at Barnard. Other assigned readings, including journal articles and book chapters, are available in the “Library Reserves” section of the website for this course on Courseworks (www.courseworks.columbia.edu), except for readings for which URL links are provided in the syllabus; those readings can be accessed by clicking on those links from the syllabus page of Courseworks.

Please subscribe to the Human Rights Watch weekly roundup. To subscribe, go to the organization’s main webpage (www.hrw.org) and look for the blue banner below the upper right corner labeled “Sign Up For Our Newsletter.”

The teaching fellows will offer weekly discussion sections. Attendance and participation in these sessions will not be a component of your course grade. Nevertheless, you should attend. The discussion sections offer an opportunity to ask questions and engage in discussion about
topics covered in lecture and in the assigned readings. Teaching fellows will also offer weekly office hours.

**TOPICS & READINGS**

**September 5. INTRODUCTION AND COURSE OVERVIEW**

**PART I. FOUNDATIONS**

**September 10 & 12. INTELLECTUAL HISTORY OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS IDEA**


**September 17 & 19. HUMAN RIGHTS AS LAW**


Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: look at [http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/) and explore some of the links to get an overview of the UN human rights system in its normative aspect


Neier, *Movement*, Chs. 4-5


**September 24. THE UDHR AND COVENANTS: WHAT DO THEY SAY?**


**September 26 & October 1 & 3. HOW DOES THE HUMAN RIGHTS REGIME WORK? – INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES**

Lecturer, October 3: Chris Kaoutzanis


Neier, *Movement*, Chs. 6-11
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: look at www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/ and explore some of the links to get an overview of the UN human rights system in its institutional aspect
Beth A. Simmons, *Mobilizing for Human Rights: International Law in Domestic Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), Chs. 2, 9

**October 8, 10, & 15. AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY**
Kofi Annan, “Secretary-General presents his Annual Report to the General Assembly.” September 20, 1999,
Neier, *Movement*, Ch. 12
Condoleezza Rice, “Rethinking the National Interest: American Realism for a New World,” *Foreign Affairs* 87:4 (July/August 2008), pp. 2-26

**October 17 & 22. CULTURAL UNIVERSALISM AND CULTURAL RELATIVISM**
“The Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam,” in 25+ Documents
Donnelly, *Universal Human Rights*, Chs. 4-7
October 24. **HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATES**

The guest speakers will be Human Rights Advocates in residence at Columbia’s Institute for the Study of Human Rights.

**PART II. CONTESTING AND EXPANDING RIGHTS**

October 29. **INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND HUMAN RIGHTS: INTRODUCTION**

Speaker: Elsa Stamatopoulou, Director, Indigenous Peoples' Rights Program, Institute for the Study of Human Rights; Adjunct Professor, Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race & Department of Anthropology, Columbia University; formerly Chief, Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, United Nations


October 31 & November 7. **INDIGENOUS PEOPLES’ RIGHTS (continued) AND ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS**


November 12 & 14. **GLOBALIZATION AND GLOBAL JUSTICE**


**November 19 & 21. WOMEN’S HUMAN RIGHTS, CHILDREN’S RIGHTS, AND SEXUAL RIGHTS**


Mark Ensalaco and Linda C. Majka, eds., *Children’s Human Rights: Progress and Challenges for Children Worldwide* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), Chs. 1 and 2


**November 26 & 28. WHAT OBLIGATIONS DO PRIVATE ENTERPRISES HAVE?**

Amnesty International, [http://www.amnestyusa.org/business](http://www.amnestyusa.org/business); review sections on the UN Norms for Business and on Alien Torts Claims Act (ATCA); look at some of the campaigns Amnesty has designed and how they are focused


National Labor Committee, [http://www.nlcenet.org/](http://www.nlcenet.org/), read one of their current reports


United Nations Global Compact, [http://www.unglobalcompact.org/AboutTheGC/TheTenPrinciples/index.html](http://www.unglobalcompact.org/AboutTheGC/TheTenPrinciples/index.html), read the ten principles


December 3. BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS: AN IMPACT-TRACKING APPROACH
   Guest lecturer: Joanne R. Bauer (SIPA '88), Adjunct Professor of Business and Human Rights, Columbia University

December 5 & 10. REFUGEE RIGHTS
   Please consult the website of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and read through the tabs under “About Us,” and more if possible: http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home