This course offers an overview of the current international human rights regime, its evolution since World War II, and the major institutions and processes by which human rights are established and enforced. Following the Holocaust and the establishment of the United Nations in 1945, human rights became firmly established in international politics, thus challenging the norm of state sovereignty. As a result of an increasingly well-defined human rights regime and improved monitoring capabilities, violations of universally accepted human rights norms are being transformed into concrete issues of international and transnational politics. The course will focus on processes of norm creation, evolution, and effectiveness by evaluating the role of inter-state coercion (realism), institutional design and domestic interests (liberalism), and principled, non-governmental mobilization of public opinion/the media (idealism). The course will also address the persistent occurrence of repression and gross human rights violations in many countries of the world and discuss possible explanations, drawing mainly from studies in political science, sociology, history, and psychology.

Grade Requirements:

The minimum requirements for successful completion of this class are:

1. regular reading of the required materials, class attendance, and active participation,
2. completion of one 2-3 page paper in response to weekly readings,
3. participation in a group presentation (during the discussion sessions on Thursdays), (4) timely completion of a final research paper (10-15 pages for undergraduates, 20-25 pages for graduate students).

Students will be assigned to one of eight groups. Each week, one group will be responsible for leading the Thursday discussion; this group should meet with the instructor the Monday before with an outline for their discussion. Each week the members of one other group will be responsible for preparing a 2-3 page paper in response to the readings. This paper should be distributed to the instructor and the group presenting by the Tuesday before the discussion. Presentation and short paper count to 25 per cent of the grade, overall attendance and participation another 25 per cent. The final paper accounts for 50 per cent of the final grade.

Book Requirements:

Week 1: Overview of the Seminar

September 26/28: Introduction and Global Snapshots

*Buergenthal, 1-20.


*Donnelly, 3-35.


*Williams, 17-20 (Sane).


Week 2: The Sources of Repression

October 3: Political, Economic, and Ideological Accounts of Human Rights Violations


**October 5: No Class Session**

**Week 3: International Relations Theory and Human Rights**

**October 10: Realist and Liberal Perspectives**

*Donnelly, 18-35.*


Steiner/Alston 1996, 148-165.

**October 12: Ideational and Transnational Perspectives**

*Risse/Ropp/Sikkink, 1-38.*


**Week 4: The Evolution of United Nations Human Rights Instruments**
October 17: Treaty Bodies

*Buergenthal, 21-78.

*Donnelly, 51-68 and 82-85.

*Williams, 164-172 (Carter, Fein).

Steiner/Alston 1996, 500-562.


October 19: Charter-based Bodies

*Buergenthal, 78-101.


Week 5: Regional Human Rights Mechanisms

October 24: Europe and the Americas

*Buergenthal, 102-227.


**October 26: Africa and Asia**

*Buergenthal, 228-247.


*Williams, 21-43 (Kausikan, Weil, Li).

Steiner/Alston 1996, 689-706.


**Week 6: Human Rights in Foreign Policy**

**October 31: US Foreign Policy and Human Rights**

*Buergenthal, 298-317.

*Donnelly, 86-135.


**November 2: Selected Cases**

Week 7: Transnational Human Rights Advocacy

November 7: The Emergence and Role of Non-Governmental Human Rights Actors

*Buergenthal, 318-321 and 327-329.


November 9: NGOs and International Standard-Setting

*Buergenthal, 321-326.


*Korey, 249-272.


Week 8: Targeting Human Rights Violators

November 14: Monitoring, Reporting, Shaming


*Risse/Ropp/Sikkink, 234-278, and one other chapter of your choice.

Korey, 159-180.

**November 16: Current Agendas**

*Williams, 59-87 (Shattuck, Decter, Weiner, Alam).

*Williams, 127-148 (McCarthy, Benjamin, Pollitt, Lutton).

*Williams, 187-200 (Gyatso, China Internet Information Center).

**Week 9: The Limits of Transnational Activism**

**November 21: What is missing?**


*Korey, 338-367.*

*Williams, 118-126 (Cockburn).*


**November 23: Thanksgiving**

**Week 10: Conclusion of the Seminar**

**November 28: Back to the Future**

*Williams, 173-186 (Ignatieff, Katz).*