

# The Human Right to Food

**Course director:** George Kent\_

**Minimum number of participants:** 5

## ONLINE COURSE: The Human Right to Food

Over the last half-century human rights advocates have emphasized civil and political rights, but work on economic and social rights is now progressing rapidly. The human right to adequate food has been clarified under initiatives led by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Many agencies at both national and global levels are recognizing the right and working to assure its realization. Participants in this course should gain an understanding of recent developments relating to the human right to adequate food, and also develop skill in applying it in specific contexts. Goals include learning about ...\_- the nature of rights systems generally; \_- the content and character of the international human rights system, in the framework of international law; \_- the historical foundations of the human right to adequate food; \_- the meaning of the human right to adequate food as it has been clarified since the World Food Summit of 1996; \_- the application of the human right to adequate food in various contexts, e.g., in specific countries, and in relation to refugees, infants, drinking water, prisons, etc. \_and, with these foundations, building skills in . . . \_- analyzing concrete situations to identify violations of the human right to adequate food;\_- formulating proposals for policy and legislation that would operationalize the realization of the human right to adequate food in specific contexts.

This is an on-line course, using the Yahoo! Groups software. During the course, participants will need to check the course website or their email every few days.

The core text for the course is *Freedom from Want: The Human Right to Adequate Food*, by the Course Director. It may be ordered directly from Georgetown University Press by using the flyer at <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~kent/flKent.pdf> or it may be obtained through other booksellers. The course will open with an essay on *Children as Victims of Structural Violence*, to make it clear that the widespread malnutrition in the world is a form of structural violence. This essay, by the Course Director, is available at <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/brill/swb/2006/0000000>

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While *Freedom from Want* will be the required core text, for additional background we recommend Wenche Barth Eide and Uwe Kracht, eds., *Food and Human Rights in Development, Volume I: Legal and Institutional Dimensions and Selected Topics*. Antwerp, The Netherlands: Intersentia, 2005.

We will give particular attention to case studies on the human right to food, and base our project work on them. A list of case studies will be provided. All participants will be asked to critically assess one of them, describe the conceptual framework that was used, and compare it with the approach taken in the course text.

For their course projects, some participants may choose to update and expand one of the existing case studies, and some may choose to prepare a new case study. These projects are to be prepared in two phases, one describing the existing situation, and one formulating recommendations as to how the right to food might be strengthened in that situation. Drafts are to be presented to the entire group for discussion. This course is based on the premise that we learn best by becoming actively engaged in dialogue about the issues that are being studied. These discussions, carried out over the Internet, are intended to help participants explore the course materials and relevant issues of interest. Discussions will be held using email and the chat facility on the Yahoo website. We will also use the Internet for voice communications, using software from <http://skype.com/helloagain.html>

The course will run from October 2 to December 23, 2006. Assignments are due by the end of the day on Friday of the specified week. Our activities will be based on the following schedule:

**Week 1:** \_Read: *Children as Victims of Structural Violence*.  
Submit: Autobiography.

**Week 2:** \_Read: *Freedom from Want*, Chapters 1 and 2.\_  
Submit: Case study selection.

**Week 3:** \_Read: *Freedom from Want*, Chapters 3 and 4.

Submit: Description of the selected case study's framework of analysis.

**Week 4:** \_Read: *Freedom from Want*, Chapters 5 and 6.\_  
Submit: Critical assessment of existing case study.

**Week 5:** \_Read: *Freedom from Want*, Chapters 7 and 8.

**Week 6:** \_Read: *Freedom from Want*, Chapters 9 and 10.\_  
Submit: Draft of descriptive components of expanded case study or new case study.

**Week 7:** \_Read: *Freedom from Want*, Chapters 11 and 12.\_  
Submit: Commentary on other participants' descriptive rough drafts.

**Week 8:** \_Read: *Freedom from Want*, Chapters 13 and 14.\_  
Submit: Draft of recommendations for expanded case study or new case study.

**Week 9:** \_Read: *Freedom from Want*, Chapters 15 and 16.\_  
Submit: Commentary on other participants' draft recommendations.

**Week 10:** \_  
Read: *Freedom from Want*, Chapter 17.\_  
Submit: Draft of term project.

**Week 11:** \_Submit: Commentary on other participants' draft term projects.

**Week 12:** \_Submit: Final term project.

This course will be offered online through TRANSCEND Peace University. Information about TPU and its registration procedures is available at <http://transcend.org/tpu/index.shtml>

The course director, George Kent, is a professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Hawai'i. His approach centers on finding remedies for social problems, especially finding ways to strengthen the weak in the face of the

strong. He works on human rights, international relations, peace, development, and environmental issues, with a special focus on nutrition and children.

Professor Kent is Co-Convener of the Commission on International Human Rights of the International Peace Research Association. He has worked as a consultant with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Children's Fund, and several civil society organizations.