

HUMAN RIGHTS

The Human Rights Department

Program Office: Institute for the Study of Human Rights; 61 Claremont Ave (Interchurch Center), 3rd floor; 646-745-8577; uhrp@columbia.edu

Departmental Website: <https://humanrights.columbia.edu/content/undergraduate-studies>

Director of Undergraduate Studies: Prof. Glenn Mitoma, gtm2136@columbia.edu

Deputy Director, ISHR: Gergana Halpern, gh2410@columbia.edu

Undergraduate Education Manager: Julia Mannes, jmm2447@columbia.edu

The Study of Human Rights

Human rights are central to contemporary understandings of justice and equality and have crucial bearing on the ability to assess and respond to emerging technological, economic, social, cultural, and political issues.

The Undergraduate Human Rights Program at the Institute for the Study of Human Rights engages students in this dynamic and evolving field and enhances their knowledge, skills, and commitment to human rights. The program offers a major and a minor in human rights (and a concentration for students who entered Columbia prior to the 2024-25 academic year). It provides students the opportunity to deepen their knowledge and explore their interests in human rights outside the classroom, and works to strengthen and support the undergraduate human rights community on campus. More information on academic and extracurricular events, opportunities, and resources for undergraduate human rights students is available on the program's website. For an advising appointment, please e-mail uhrp@columbia.edu.

Student Advising Consulting Advisers

Prior to each semester, students should submit a [major](#), [minor](#), or [concentration](#) worksheet. These worksheets are also available on the ISHR undergraduate program website. Students may also e-mail uhrp@columbia.edu to set up an advising appointment.

Enrolling in Classes

Students are encouraged to take Introduction to Human Rights (HRTS UN 3001) early in their studies, if possible.

We offer a selection of human rights courses at the 3000- and 4000-level. Courses offered by other schools or departments, which are pre-approved for the degree can be found on our [undergraduate course list](#).

If you have questions about course approvals or enrollment in HRTS classes, please email UHRP@columbia.edu.

Preparing for Graduate Study

Students interested in pursuing graduate human rights studies may be interested in applying for the Human Rights Studies B.A./M.A. option. Applicants should apply the semester before the one in which they intend to begin taking courses that will count toward the M.A. For information on how to apply for the Human Rights Studies Master of Arts (HRSMA) program and relevant deadlines, please visit this [page](#). All students would complete the 30 credit points and 2 Residence Units required of

the M.A. program, but the joint option allows students to receive an M.A. one semester earlier than would normally be possible. Please refer to the [B.A./M.A. page](#) of the website for additional information.

Students are also encouraged to review the information below pertaining to the Human Rights Research Award, the Senior Thesis Track, and other Professional Development resources, which may be of interest to those planning to pursue graduate studies.

Departmental Honors and Senior Thesis Departmental Honors

To be eligible for departmental honors, a student must satisfy all the requirements for the major, maintain a 3.6 GPA in the major, maintain an overall GPA of 3.6, and complete a thesis of sufficiently high quality to merit honors. A thesis is required for all students who wish to be considered for honors, but does not guarantee honors. Students who graduate in October, February, or May of a given academic year are eligible for honors consideration in May. Normally no more than 10% of graduating majors receive departmental honors in a given academic year.

Students interested in writing a thesis for honors consideration complete a two semester course sequence during their final year of study. In the fall, students take HRTS UN3994 Human Rights Senior Seminar: Research Methods, which introduces students to various research methods and guides them through the proposal development process. In the spring, students take HRTS UN3996 Human Rights Thesis Seminar. This course will consist of group sessions, where students will present their work and participate in discussions, as well as individual meetings with their thesis supervisor, who is also the course instructor.

Students are encouraged to write a thesis, but they should not do so solely to be eligible for honors consideration. Rather, students should consider enrolling in the thesis seminar in order to demonstrate their capacity to produce a work of original research and develop more specialized knowledge of a human rights issue. You can learn more about specific timelines for Thesis application at <https://humanrights.columbia.edu/content/human-rights-major>

Undergraduate Research Opportunities

Human Rights Research Award

In addition to the Senior Thesis Track, the ISHR Human Rights Research Award provides students with an opportunity to gain valuable research experience, while supporting the work of Columbia faculty conducting human rights-related research. Students who receive the Award are expected to complete approximately 80-120 hours of research assistance during the academic year. The research opportunities selected for each academic year are circulated to students in the Fall semester. ISHR will award one stipend per research opportunity in the amount of \$1,750. Priority will be given to HRSMA and UHRP students. Please visit our [financial resources page](#) for this and other opportunities.

Academic Prizes and Professional Development

ISHR fosters undergraduate students' academic and professional development by awarding prizes and stipends, organizing events and activities with human rights practitioners and experts, and connecting students with resources related to the human rights field. Specifics are available on our [Professional Development and Financial Resources page](#).

Guidance for Undergraduate Students in the Department

Welcome to the Institute for the Study of Human Rights. You might want to join the [ISHR Newsletter](#) or contact UHRP@columbia.edu to begin receiving undergraduate announcements.

Program Planning for all Students

Guidelines for all Human Rights Majors and Minors

Human Rights Concentrators who entered Columbia in or before the 2023-2024 academic year should consult the requirements at the bottom of this page regarding Concentrations. Students should also consult the general academic policies of their school.

Planning Forms

Prior to each semester that they take courses in the program, students should submit a [major, minor, or concentration](#) worksheet by emailing uhrp@columbia.edu. Students may also email UHRP@columbia.edu to set up an advising appointment.

Grades

No course with a grade of D or lower is credited towards the major or minor. One course, with the exception of the three core courses required for the major or the one core course for the minor, can be taken for Pass/D/Fail. The student must receive a grade of P for the course to count towards the requirements of the major. All other courses must be taken for a letter grade. All seminar courses must be taken for a letter grade.

Double-Counting

In accordance with the academic policies of their school, students may double-count a maximum of two classes towards the Human Rights Major or Minor with another program's major or minor, provided that the classes are approved to fulfill a requirement for each program. Students should consult the academic policies of their school for specific information regarding the double-counting of courses taken to fulfill Global Core or other school requirements.

Summer Courses and Courses Taken at Other Columbia Schools

Courses taken at Barnard College and summer courses taken through the School of Professional Studies may be counted for the major or minor requirements, with departmental approval.

Course Numbering Structure

Courses 3999 and below are strictly undergraduate courses; 4000-level courses are for graduate and advanced undergraduate students, 6000-level and above are for graduate students with limited exceptions.

Guidance for First-Year Students

If you are considering pursuing a Human Rights Major or Minor, we would be glad to meet with you and tell you more about the degree, share advising tips, and help you familiarize yourself with our programs and the work of the Institute for the Study of Human Rights (ISHR) more broadly. Please don't hesitate to contact us at uhrp@columbia.edu, sign up for the [ISHR Newsletter](#), which disseminates information about human rights events, opportunities, and initiatives on campus, or visit our [website](#). Most ISHR events are open to the entire Columbia community and we

look forward to welcoming all students interested in human rights (even if you have not declared your major/minor yet!).

Guidance for Transfer Students

Transfer Credit/Study Abroad Credit

Human rights students may transfer a maximum of three courses (nine Columbia-equivalent credits) towards the Major or one course (three Columbia-equivalent credits) towards the Minor for courses taken at another institution. This includes study abroad credit and Advanced Placement courses. No more than one AP course can be transferred towards the major or the minor. Typically no more than one transfer course can count toward the distributional, and the remainder would count for the specialization. The application of transferred courses must be approved by the Director of Undergraduate Studies or the undergraduate adviser.

Students wishing to count transfer courses toward the major or the minor should email uhrp@columbia.edu with their Entrance/Transfer Credit Report or a transcript, the syllabi of the courses they want to count toward departmental requirements, and a statement of how they want to apply the transfer credits to the requirements.

Undergraduate Programs of Study

Required Coursework for all Programs

All students in the program complete HRTS UN3001 INTRODUCTION TO HUMAN RIGHTS

Major in Human Rights

The major in human rights requires 10 courses for a minimum of 31 points as follows. One of the distributional or specialization courses must be a seminar.

Core Courses

HRTS UN3001	INTRODUCTION TO HUMAN RIGHTS
HRTS UN3190	INT'L HUMAN RIGHTS LAW
HRTS UN3995	HUMAN RIGHTS SENIOR SEMINAR

Distributional Requirement *

Students take one course in three of these four categories (three courses), for a minimum of 9 credit points.

Politics and history
Culture and representation
Political theory and philosophy
Social and economic processes

Specialization Requirement **

Students fulfill the specialization requirement by focusing on a particular discipline, taking four courses for a minimum of 12 credit points offered by a single department or institute.

* Please see the ISHR [undergraduate course list](#) for the current list of courses that fulfill the distributional requirement of the major.

**The goal of the specialization requirement is to equip students with the tools of a specific discipline. Students should inform the human rights program of their intended specialization before taking courses to fulfill this requirement. As a general rule, fields of study listed as [academic programs](#) on the bulletin are approved for the specialization requirement if a free-standing major is offered. Courses approved for that major are generally approved for the human rights specialization.

However, language acquisition and studio courses may not be taken to fulfill the specialization requirement. Students are encouraged to take any core and/or methodology courses required by a program when fulfilling their specialization requirement. Students are also encouraged to take courses within their chosen specialization that focus on human rights issues, but the specialization requirement can be fulfilled by taking any four courses within the same discipline. For example, if a student's specialization is Political Science, he or she can fulfill the specialization requirement by taking any four POLS courses.

Minor in Human Rights

The minor in human rights [requires](#) 5 courses for a minimum of 15 points as follows:

HRTS UN3001 INTRODUCTION TO HUMAN RIGHTS

Four additional human rights courses.

Please see the ISHR [undergraduate course list](#) for the current list of courses that fulfill the Minor requirements.

B.A. / M.A. Program

Applicants interested in the Human Rights Studies B.A./M.A. option should apply the semester before the one in which they intend to begin taking courses that will count toward the M.A. For information on how to apply for the Human Rights Studies Master of Arts (HRSMA) program and relevant deadlines, please visit this [page](#). All students would complete the 30 credit points and 2 Residence Units required of the M.A. program, but the joint option allows students to receive an M.A. one semester earlier than would normally be possible. Please refer to the [B.A./M.A. page](#) of the website for additional information.

For students who entered Columbia in or before the 2023-24 academic year

As of Fall 2024, the University is phasing out Concentrations. Students who entered Columbia prior to the 2024-25 academic year may pursue a Concentration in Human Rights. Students who previously enrolled in the Concentration are also welcome to discuss switching to a Minor (details above). The policies outlined above regarding Grades and Double-Counting Courses also apply to students pursuing the Human Rights Concentration.

Concentration in Human Rights

The concentration in human rights requires 8 courses for a minimum of 24 points as follows:

HRTS UN3001 INTRODUCTION TO HUMAN RIGHTS

Seven additional human rights courses, one of which must be a seminar.

Please see the ISHR [undergraduate course list](#) for the current list of courses that fulfill the concentration requirements.

HRTS UN3001 INTRODUCTION TO HUMAN RIGHTS. 3.00 points.

Evolution of the theory and content of human rights; the ideology and impact of human rights movements; national and international human rights law and institutions; their application with attention to universality within states, including the U.S. and internationally

HRTS UN3190 INT'L HUMAN RIGHTS LAW. 3.00 points.

This course will introduce students to the international law of human rights, and give a basic orientation to fundamental issues and controversies. The course has two principal focal points: first, the nuts and bolts of how international law functions in the field of human rights, and second, the value and limitations of legal approaches to a variety of human rights issues. Throughout the course, both theoretical and practical questions will be addressed, including who bears legal duties and who can assert legal claims, how these duties might be enforced, and accountability and remedy for violations. Attention will be given to how international law is made, what sorts of assumptions underlie various legal mechanisms, and how the law works in a variety of contexts

Spring 2026: HRTS UN3190

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
HRTS 3190	001/11288	T 4:10pm - 6:00pm 306 Uris Hall	Belinda Cooper	3.00	22/24

Fall 2026: HRTS UN3190

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
HRTS 3190	001/10894	T 6:10pm - 8:00pm Room TBA	Belinda Cooper	3.00	1/22

HRTS UN3960 Refugees, Rights, and Representation. 3.00 points.

Given that, according to the UNHCR, there are currently 108.4 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, over 35 million of whom are refugees, it is unsurprising that their predicament preoccupies international lawyers, academics from the social sciences to the humanities, engineers and economists, journalists, policy specialists at NGOs, government officials, artists, tech companies, philanthropists, and, most significantly, displaced persons themselves. This seminar asks how these different actors draw on specific discourses and arguments—technological, scientific, personal, moral, historical—as they construct the figure and the problem of ‘the refugee.’ We will recognize refugee crises as an issue of urgent public concern as well as an occasion for interrogating how such crises are represented across academic, legal, and cultural conversations. Does displacement caused by personal persecution, natural disasters and climate change, armed conflict, or economic deprivation invite different kinds of international attention or sympathy? Where does the sanctuary promised the citizen end and the hospitality owed the stranger begin? How do contemporary developments in climate science, social media technologies, and big data intersect with discourses on refugees? And if ‘the refugee’ tells the lie to the nation state’s capacity to account for the world’s people, what other forms of political and social organization does the refugee live, inspire, create, or warn against? To consider such questions, we will examine political theory, history, anthropology, and philosophy; analyze international legal documents, policy proposals, investigative journalism, and NGO reports; and engage with novels, poetry, film, and photography, among other materials

HRTS UN3970 Introduction to Genocide Studies. 3.00 points.

This course provides students with an introduction to the study of genocide. In this class, we will take a critical approach to understanding genocide, meaning: we will try to avoid easy moralizing and distancing of genocide; we won't take existing legal and political definitions of genocide for granted; and we will think about power in relation to genocide perpetration and prevention. Our strategy will be interdisciplinary, meaning: we will explore the ways historians, psychologist, lawyers, political scientists, and others have tried to understand genocide; and we will reflect on the limits on what and how we can know about genocide as a human experience. This course aspires to be practical and applied, meaning this course fundamentally anti-genocidal in its purpose, and students will have the opportunity to contribute to and/or develop practical efforts commemorate, advocate against, or prevent the perpetration of genocide

Fall 2026: HRTS UN3970

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
HRTS 3970	001/10895	W 10:10am - 12:00pm Room TBA	Glenn Mitoma	3.00	19/22

HRTS UN3994 HUMAN RIGHTS SENIOR SEMINAR RSRCH METHOD. 4.00 points.

This course aims to introduce students to human rights research methods, while providing them with practical research tools. The course will be tailored to students' interests, disciplinary backgrounds and research areas. The specific topics students will research and the methods they will employ will determine the substantive focus of readings. During the course we will ask the following questions: 'what is human rights research?', how do you carry out research in an interdisciplinary field?, what distinguishes academic research from applied research and advocacy? While answering these questions, you will become familiar with the literature on human rights methodologies, and you will engage in analysis and critical assessment of important human rights research literature. In addition, the course gives a practical approach to research methodology. You will learn about a diverse set of methodologies, such as interviewing and focus groups, archival research, ethnographic and participant observation, interviewing focus groups, conducting online research; interpretive and non-empirical methods and basic quantitative methodologies to be employed in the study of human rights. As you learn about different methodological approaches, you will develop your own research project. Scholars and practitioners in the field of human rights research will present their work and engage in discussions with students about their own research, challenges, successes and publication venues. NB: This course is geared towards students who commit to writing a senior thesis. It is part of a two-course sequence: HRTS UN3994 Section 001 Human Rights Senior Seminar: Research Methods in the fall and HRTS UN3996 Human Rights Thesis Seminar in the spring. Students who do not intend to write a thesis should enroll in HRTS UN3995 section 001 Human Rights Senior Seminar, which is a one-semester course taught each semester focused on writing a seminar paper

Fall 2026: HRTS UN3994

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
HRTS 3994	001/10896	T 2:10pm - 4:00pm Room TBA	Tracey Holland	4.00	7/20

HRTS UN3995 HUMAN RIGHTS SENIOR SEMINAR. 4.00 points.Prerequisites: *HRTS V3001*.

The senior seminar is a capstone course required for the human rights major. The seminar provides students the opportunity to discuss human rights from a variety of disciplinary perspectives and to explore various theoretical approaches and research methodologies. Students undertake individual research projects while collectively examining human rights through directed readings and discussion

Spring 2026: HRTS UN3995

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
HRTS 3995	001/11289	T 2:10pm - 4:00pm 507 Philosophy Hall	Felisa Tibbitts	4.00	11/20

Fall 2026: HRTS UN3995

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
HRTS 3995	001/10897	Th 10:10am - 12:00pm Room TBA	Shourideh Molavi	4.00	3/20

HRTS UN3996 HUMAN RIGHTS THESIS SEMINAR. 3.00 points.

Priority given to human rights majors/concentrators.

Prerequisites: *HRTS W3995* Human Rights Senior Seminar. Additional information available at: <http://humanrightscolumbia.org/education/undergraduate>

Prerequisites: HRTS UN3994 Human Rights Senior Seminar: Research Methods. Additional information available at: <http://humanrightscolumbia.org/education/undergraduate> This course is designed for human rights students who wish to write a honors-eligible thesis. The course will consist of group sessions, during which time students will present their work and participate in discussions, and individual meetings with the thesis supervisor. The course instructor is the thesis supervisor for each student

Spring 2026: HRTS UN3996

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
HRTS 3996	001/11290	T 2:10pm - 4:00pm 507 Lewisohn Hall	Tracey Holland	3.00	5/12

HRTS GU4011 Indigenous Rights and Settler Colonialism in North America. 3.00 points.

Course Description This interdisciplinary course explores both the rights of Indigenous people in settler colonies as well as the complex historical and theoretical relationship between human rights and settler colonialism. We will pursue three lines of inquiry. The first critically explores how central political concepts of the international state system—sovereignty, property, territory, self-determination—entwine the histories of settler colonialism and human rights. The second charts the rise and mechanisms of the international Indigenous rights movement, in particular its activity at the United Nations leading to the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007, and its contributions to ongoing debates on environmental and climate justice, group rights, natural resources and territorial autonomy, and cultural rights. The third unit interrogates settler state responses to the movement for Indigenous human rights, such as cooptation, recognition, and apology. Through readings drawn from history, ethnography, political and critical theory, international relations, Native studies, law, and documents produced by intergovernmental organizations and NGOs, we will explore and deepen the tensions between human rights as a theory and practice and the political lives and aspirations of Indigenous peoples and activists. What technologies of rule—such as residential school systems and property law—do settler colonial states deploy to dispossess Indigenous peoples? How have Indigenous peoples used the international human rights regime to mobilize against such dispossession? How have these states resisted the global Indigenous rights movement? And can the human rights regime, rooted in the international state system, meaningfully contribute to anticolonial movements in liberal settler colonies? While we will touch on settler colonialism as it manifests around the globe, the course's geographical focus will be on North America. Course objectives Throughout this course, you will: Develop a historically-informed understanding of both international indigenous rights and settler colonialism as idea, practice, institution, and discourse; Place the literature on human rights and settler colonialism into critical conversation in order to deepen existing conceptual problems and generate new ones; Identify the main arguments in theoretical texts, legal and policy documents, and public debates; Read and think across disciplines to develop arguments that speak to multiple scholarly communities; Produce an original argument in relation to other authors' arguments, and construct and organize an analytical, argumentative paper; Communicate ideas effectively in class discussions and presentations; Bring case studies and questions encountered outside the course into the classroom to challenge or nuance the assigned material

Fall 2026: HRTS GU4011

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
HRTS 4011	001/10898	Th 12:10pm - 2:00pm Room TBA	Timothy Wyman-McCarthy	3.00	3/22

HRTS GU4215 NGOs # THE HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT. 3.00 points.

This class takes a social movement perspective to analyze and understand the international human rights movement. The course will address the evolution of the international human rights movement and focus on the NGOs that drive the movement on the international, regional and domestic levels. Sessions will highlight the experiences of major human rights NGOs and will address topics including strategy development, institutional representation, research methodologies, partnerships, networks, venues of engagement, campaigning, fundraising and, perhaps most importantly, the fraught and complex debates about adaptation to changing global circumstances, starting with the pre-Cold War period and including some of the most up-to-date issues and questions going on in this field today

Fall 2026: HRTS GU4215

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
HRTS 4215	001/10899	T 4:10pm - 6:00pm Room TBA	Louis Bickford	3.00	0/22

HRTS GU4270 Digital Advocacy for Human Rights: Social Media and Open Source Intelligence. 3.00 points.

PRIORITY:HRSMA. GRAD & UNDERGRAD(3&4YR) ON 1ST DAY OF TERM

This course examines how digital technologies are transforming human rights advocacy, with primary emphasis on social media campaigning. Students will master hands-on social media platform practices while exploring how open source intelligence (OSINT) methodologies are used to monitor violations and present evidence online through recent case studies. The course prioritizes developing practical social media advocacy and analytic skills, examining how civil society organizations navigate platform policies, content moderation, and political pressures to drive change. Students will analyze how platform policy shifts and content governance changes constrain advocacy strategies, learning to craft campaigns and frame messages for specific audiences. They will analyze cases involving gender, immigration, and trafficking, among others. The OSINT component provides conceptual understanding through contemporary examples including forensic architecture investigations, satellite imagery documentation of mass atrocities, and open source evidence from conflicts like Ukraine. A key component of the course is a research or advocacy project of your choosing. You will develop framing strategies, map relevant networks, and create social media content that demonstrates mastery of digital advocacy techniques. The emergence of these new tools and organizations has produced new ethical dilemmas and reshaped old ones—concerning such fundamental issues as privacy vs. security, the limits of free speech, the trade-off between ethical and pragmatic messaging and fundraising strategies, topics that will be addressed at length in class discussions

Spring 2026: HRTS GU4270

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
HRTS 4270	001/16645	W 6:10pm - 8:00pm 509 Hamilton Hall	Ted Perlmutter	3.00	11/22

HRTS GU4380 Advocacy for Socio-Economic Rights. 3.00 points.

This course will examine practical issues, opportunities, tactics and strategies to advocate for economic and social rights. The course will incorporate central debates about economic and social rights, such as how to identify violators and define state responsibility, whether these rights can be litigated, and how to make implementable recommendations for change, measure implementation and measure impact. The course will also look more in depth at the standards and fulfillment challenges on several of the key rights including health, housing, education, and labor. Throughout the course, you will focus on one economic and social rights topic of your choice. Through the lens of your chosen topic, you will review how organizations and social movements have engaged to affect change on similar issues, and use that research to explore many of the practical skills of advocacy and campaigning: framing recommendations and calls to action; drafting policy briefs; crafting media pitches and social media content; and designing and evaluating an overall advocacy strategy

Spring 2026: HRTS GU4380

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
HRTS 4380	001/11292	T 4:10pm - 6:00pm 607 Martin Luther King Building	Mila Rosenthal	3.00	6/22

HRTS GU4400 SEXUAL ORIENT,GENDR ID,HUM RTS. 3.00 points.

PRIORITY:HRSMA. GRAD & UNDERGRAD (3&4YR) ON 1ST DAY OF TERM

Debates over the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people have never been more visible in the international arena. Advocates are beginning to have some success in putting sexual orientation and gender identity on the agenda for inclusion in human rights instruments. But in many local and regional contexts, state-sanctioned homophobia is on the rise, from the official anti-gay stance of Russia featured during the Sochi Winter Games to the passage of Mississippi's anti-gay bill and Uganda's anti-homosexuality act. This course examines these trends in relation to strategies pursued by grassroots activists and NGOs and the legal issues they raise, including marriage and family rights, discrimination, violence, torture, sex classification, and asylum. We will also focus on current debates about the relation between sexual rights and gender justice, tensions between universalist constructions of gay/trans identity and local formations of sexual and gender non-conformity, and legacies of colonialism

HRTS GU4460 Climate Justice. 3.00 points.

The unfolding climate emergency occurs at the confluence of three global systems of domination – capitalism, racialized imperialism, and patriarchy. Premised as they are on exploitation, competition, and inequality rather than consideration, cooperation and balance, these systems of domination not only have caused the crisis but are seemingly unable to resolve it. Among the injustices of the contemporary impasse is the likelihood the people who have least benefited from the global (dis)order, and especially minorities in the global south, will be the worst affected casualties of climate change. Encompassing a focus on equity and frameworks for accountability and redress, the human rights paradigm is a useful lens through which to analyze the emergency, exert accountability, and imagine better futures. It is against this backdrop that this interdisciplinary (climate science, law, politics, social science, development studies and anthropology) course on Climate Justice has been introduced to the Human Rights Studies MA program. This 3-credit course addresses contemporary issues in the evolving discourse and epistemology of climate justice. How should we understand the climate emergency from a social justice perspective? What terminologies, discourses and paradigms are useful? How have individuals, non-government organizations and social movements sought to overcome climate change vulnerabilities and advance climate justice? What litigation, law and policy initiatives have been brought, and with what level of success? And what alternative models of living, working and being are conceivable for a more socially, ecologically, and existentially sustainable world?

Spring 2026: HRTS GU4460

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
HRTS 4460	001/11293	T 12:10pm - 2:00pm 607 Martin Luther King Building	Jacqueline Dugard	3.00	6/22

HRTS GU4500 SOCIO-ECONOMIC RIGHTS. 3.00 points.

The course addresses selected issues in the protection of socio-economic rights in an international and comparative perspective. Socio-economic rights have emerged from the margins into the mainstream of human rights. The course will take this status as its starting point and examine the human rights to housing, food, water, health and sanitation in depth. We will explore conceptual issues through the lens of specific rights which will help us ground these principles and ideas in concrete cases. We will discuss developments on socioeconomic rights and examine their relevance in the United States as well as selected other countries, particularly those with progressive legislation, policies and jurisprudence. What is the meaning and scope of the rights to housing, food, water, health and sanitation? What is the impact of discrimination and inequalities on the enjoyment of socio-economic rights? How can governments be held accountable for the realization of human rights? What machinery is there at the international level to ensure that the rights are protected, respected and fulfilled? How can this machinery be enhanced? How can judicial, quasijudicial, administrative and political mechanisms be used at the domestic level? What is the role of different actors in the context of human rights, the role of States and individuals, but also (powerful) non-State actors and civil society? How have activists and policymakers responded to challenges? And what lies ahead for the human rights movement in addressing economic and social rights in a multilateral, globalized world?

Fall 2026: HRTS GU4500

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
HRTS 4500	001/10901	T 12:10pm - 2:00pm Room TBA	Jacqueline Dugard	3.00	9/22

HRTS GU4600 HUMAN RIGHTS IN ANTHROPOCENE. 3.00 points.

In August 2016, a working group of the International Geological Congress voted to acknowledge a new geological epoch, following 11,700 years of the Holocene, and that it would be called The Anthropocene. The announcement indicated a new era in the earth's chronology marked by the consequences of human activity on the planet's ecosystems. Closely related to discussions of sustainability, investigations into the Anthropocene tend to focus on environmental and ecological issues while ignoring its social justice dimensions. This course will investigate how Human Rights has and will be impacted by the Anthropocene, with special attention paid to the human dimensions and consequences of anthropogenic change. Do new and troubling revelations about anthropogenic mistreatment of the earth and its resources modify or amplify the kinds of responsibilities that govern activity between individuals and communities? How do we scale the human response from the urban, to the periurban, to the rural? How must the study of Human Rights evolve to address violence and mistreatment associated not just among humans but also amid human habitats? What sorts of juridical changes must occur to recognize and respond to new manifestations of social injustice that relate directly to consequences of anthropogenic changes to the Earth system? Topics will include discussions of the Environmental Justice movement, agribusiness, access to (and allocation of) natural resources, population growth; its global impact, advocacy for stronger and more accountability through environmental legal change, biodiversity in urban environments, and the growing category of environmental refugees

HRTS GU4650 CHILDREN'S RIGHTS ADVOCACY. 3.00 points.

This course is designed to introduce contemporary children's rights issues and help students develop practical advocacy skills to protect and promote the rights of children. Students will explore case studies of advocacy campaigns addressing issues including juvenile justice, child labor, child marriage, the use of child soldiers, corporal punishment, migration and child refugees, female genital mutilation, and LGBT issues affecting children. Over the course of the semester, students will become familiar with international children's rights standards, as well as a variety of advocacy strategies and avenues, including use of the media, litigation, and advocacy with UN, legislative bodies, and the private sector. Written assignments will focus on practical advocacy tools, including advocacy letters, op-eds, submissions to UN mechanisms or treaty bodies, and the development of an overarching advocacy strategy, including the identification of goals and objectives, and appropriate advocacy targets and tactics

Fall 2026: HRTS GU4650

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
HRTS 4650	001/10902	F 2:10pm - 4:00pm Room TBA	Michael Bochenek, Jo Becker	3.00	5/22

HRTS GU4915 HUMAN RIGHTS # URBAN PUB SPACE. 3.00 points.

Priority for 3rd & 4th yr CC/GS HUMR studs & to HRSMA studs

The course will explore the often-contested terrain of urban contexts, looking at cities from architectural, sociological, historical, and political positions. What do rights have to do with the city? Can the ancient idea of a right to the city tell us something fundamental about both rights and cities? Our notion of citizenship is based in the understanding of a city as a community, and yet today why do millions of people live in cities without citizenship? The course will be organized thematically in order to discuss such issues as the consequences of cities developments in relation to their peripheries beginning with the normative idea of urban boundaries deriving from fortifying walls, debates around the public sphere, nomadic architecture and urbanism, informal settlements such as slums and shantytowns, surveillance and control in urban centers, refugees and the places they live, catastrophes natural and man-made and reconstruction, and sovereign areas within cities the United Nations, War Crimes Tribunals. At the heart of our inquiry will be an investigation of the ways in which rights within urban contexts are either granted or withheld

HRTS GU4930 INT'L HUMANITARIAN LAW/HUM RGTS. 4.00 points.

Prerequisites: the instructor's permission. Please e-mail the instructor at bc14@columbia.edu.

This seminar will cover various issues, debates, and concepts in the international law of armed conflict (known as international humanitarian law), particularly as it relates to the protection of non-combatants (civilians and prisoners of war). In doing so, we will examine how international humanitarian law and human rights law intersect. Both sets of legal norms are designed to protect the lives, well-being, and dignity of individuals. However, the condition of armed conflict provides a much wider set of options for governments and individuals to engage in violent, deadly action against others, including killing, forcibly detaining, and destroying the property of those designated as combatants. At the same time, the means of waging war are not unlimited, but rather are tightly regulated by both treaty and customary law. This course will examine how these regulations operate in theory and practice, focusing on the principles of distinction, proportionality, and military necessity

Spring 2026: HRTS GU4930

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
HRTS 4930	001/11294	W 10:10am - 12:00pm 607 Martin Luther King Building	Bruce Cronin	4.00	14/22

HRTS GU4950 HUMAN RIGHTS # HUMAN WRONGS. 3.00 points.
MAIL INSTR FOR PERM.PRIORITY:3&4YR HUMAN RIGHT & HRSMA

Prerequisites: the instructor's permission. Please e-mail the instructor at bc14@columbia.edu.

Prerequisites: the instructors permission. Please e-mail the instructor at bc14@columbia.edu. This course will examine the tension between two contradictory trends in world politics. On the one hand, we have emerged from a century that has seen some of the most brutal practices ever perpetrated by states against their populations in the form of genocide, systematic torture, mass murder and ethnic cleansing. Many of these abuses occurred after the Holocaust, even though the mantra never again was viewed by many as a pledge never to allow a repeat of these practices. Events in the new century suggest that these trends will not end anytime soon. At the same time, since the middle of the twentieth century, for the first time in human history there has been a growing global consensus that all individuals are entitled to at least some level of protection from abuse by their governments. This concept of human rights has been institutionalized through international law, diplomacy, international discourse, transnational activism, and the foreign policies of many states. Over the past two decades, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and international tribunals have gone further than any institutions in human history to try to stem state abuses. This seminar will try to make sense of these contradictions

Fall 2026: HRTS GU4950

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
HRTS 4950	001/10903	W 2:10pm - 4:00pm Room TBA	Bruce Cronin	3.00	3/22

HRTS GU4965 Gender-Based Violence # Human Rights. 3.00 points.

The term 'gendercide' highlights a range of distinct and specific forms of violence executed against human beings based on their own gender self-identification as well as patriarchal assumptions about their gender. In this course, we will examine research discerning, movements challenging, and the adjudication, and/or lack thereof, of Gender Based Violence (GBV) in several major categories traversing spatial, temporal, and ideological contexts, including: reproductive rights and health; trafficking and migration; and disaster and pandemics. It is critical to: interrogate the ideologies that drive and sustain GBV; examine in detail the harm it presents to human beings; explore what can be done to protect the security of those experiencing GBV; and to think about measures of prevention to guard additional human beings from experiencing it. The heart of the course will involve an intersectional analysis of specific case studies; highlighting the GBV associated with each case; examining the impact of GBV on human rights; and how GBV has been addressed in society. The close study of each case will assist students in illuminating intricacies, complexities, and challenges to human security in specific contexts

Fall 2026: HRTS GU4965

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
HRTS 4965	001/11252	W 2:10pm - 4:00pm Room TBA	Julie Rajan	3.00	0/22

HRTS GU4970 Refugees, Citizenship, Migration. 3.00 points.

This interdisciplinary course grapples with nation-states and cities at its margins, exploring the exclusions, oppositions, silences and, in particular, the 'Others' or 'in-betweens' of the nation-state as an organizing tool. 'Illegal migrants', 'refugees', 'asylum seekers', 'exiles', 'nomads', 'aliens', and other 'Others': these are all in-between figures, exceptions to a political order defined by membership in the city, borders, sovereignty and nation-states. In their very existence, they represent a challenge to this political order, as social and political theorists have long recognized. This seminar explores the dynamics, contradictions and politics surrounding nation-states and their Others with particular attention to the responses to them on the part of ostensibly liberal-democratic states. We examine the relationship between citizenship, statelessness, refugee-hood and migration as exceptions to a political order defined by membership in the city, borders, sovereignty and nation-states. Students will engage with film, fiction, visual animations and displacement maps to examine key theoretical and critical interventions by scholars who examine nation-states and cities at their margins. To this end, participants will examine key theoretical interventions by Hannah Arendt, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Giorgio Agamben alongside scholars who have grappled with, contested, and developed their ideas, such as Étienne Balibar, Didier Bigo, Jacques Rancière, and Seyla Benhabib. With these texts, the participants will attempt to explore non-national or post-national alternatives to the nation-state and citizenship as a tool for planning and organization of people and space. Taken together, this course provides an alternative to conventional scholarship on this subject. It engages with and provides an alternative to the mainstream literature to take for granted the inclusive and integrative character of nation-states and its respective memberships in the form of refugees, citizens and migrants. At first glance, the course may appear highly theoretical, but not to worry—we will move slowly through the texts and concepts together. The instructor will also ensure that we apply the ideas discussed in class to concrete and tangible case studies with examples given to enable easier access and collective learning

Fall 2026: HRTS GU4970

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
HRTS 4970	001/10912	M 10:10am - 12:00pm Room TBA	Shourideh Molavi	3.00	0/22

Of Related Interest

Please see the ISHR undergraduate [course list](#) for courses approved for the human rights major, minor, and concentration.