HUMAN RIGHTS

Program Office: Institute for the Study of Human Rights; 475 Riverside Drive (Interchurch Center), 3rd floor; 646-745-8577; uhrp@columbia.edu

Departmental Website: http://humanrightscolumbia.org/education/undergraduate

Director of Undergraduate Studies: Prof. Andrew Nathan, 931 International Affairs Building; 212-854-6909. Office hours: TBC.

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 concentration in human rights, 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 humanrightsed@humanrightscolumbia.org.

Departmental Honors

To be eligible for departmental honors, a student must satisfy all the requirements for 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 UN3995 Human Rights Senior 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.

Guidelines for all Human Rights Majors, Concentrators, and Special Concentrators

Student should also consult the general academic policies of their school.

Planning Forms

Major and concentration planning forms are available on the ISHR undergraduate program website. Prior to each semester, students should submit an online course advising form. Students may also e-mail 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 concentration.

One course, with the exception of the three core courses required for the major, 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.

Transfer Credit/Study Abroad Credit

Human rights majors may transfer a maximum of three courses from other institutions. Human rights concentrators may transfer a maximum of two courses from other institutions. This includes study abroad credit. No more than one Advanced Placement course can be counted for the major or concentration. The application of transferred courses to the major or concentration must be approved by the Director of Undergraduate Studies or the undergraduate adviser.

Students wishing to count transfer courses toward the major or concentration should email uhrp@columbia.edu with their Transfer Credit Report, 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.

Double-Counting

Students may double count major or concentration courses toward the fulfillment of degree requirements in accordance with the academic policies of their school.

Normally, courses for one program of study (i.e. major, concentration, special concentration, etc.) may not be used to satisfy the course requirements for another program of study. Students should consult the academic policies of their school for specific information.

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

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<tr>
<td>HRTS UN3001</td>
<td>Introduction to Human Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>HRTS UN3190</td>
<td>International Human Rights Law</td>
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<tr>
<td>HRTS UN3995</td>
<td>Human Rights Senior Seminar</td>
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Distributional Requirement

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

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<th>Category</th>
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<td>Politics and history</td>
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<td>Culture and representation</td>
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<td>Political theory and philosophy</td>
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<td>Social and economic processes</td>
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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.

### 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 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.

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Spring 2021: HRTS UN3001

**HRTS UN3190 International Human Rights Law. 3 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.

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Fall 2021: HRTS UN3190

HRTS UN3995 Human Rights Senior Seminar. 4 points.
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.

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Spring 2021: HRTS UN3995

HRTS UN3996 Human Rights Thesis Seminar. 3 points.
Priority given to human rights majors/concentrators.

Prerequisites: HRTS UN3995 Human Rights Senior Seminar. Additional information available at: [humanrights.columbia.org/education/undergraduate](http://humanrights.columbia.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.

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HRTS GU4215 NGOs and the Human Rights Movement: Strategies, Successes and Challenges. 3 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 2021: HRTS GU4215

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HRTS GU4230 Refugees, Forced Migration, and Displacement. 3 points.

Refugees, forced migration, and displacement: these subjects top the headlines of the world's newspapers, not to mention our social media feeds. Over a million refugees have reached Europe's shores in recent years, and conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere continue to force people to flee their homes. In the aftermath of the financial crisis and 9/11, politicians in the Global North have focused on borders: who crosses them and how. Walls are being erected. Referendums are being held. We are consumed with thorny questions about who gets to join our political communities. Today there are over 65 million refugees, displaced persons, and stateless persons in the world, represented at last summer's Olympics by their own team for first the time, a testament to their increasing visibility on the world stage. Global forced displacement recently hit a historical high. And while numbers are increasing, solutions are still elusive. The modern refugee regime, the collection of laws and institutions designed to address the problems faced by refugees, has developed slowly over the course of the last 100 years, first in response to specific crises. That regime has been shaped by a changing geopolitical landscape. At the end of the Cold War, institutions in the field expanded their mandates and preferred solutions to the "problem" of refugees changed. And yet today many scholars and policy makers argue the regime is not fit for purpose. They point to the European refugee crisis as the latest case in point. Why? What went wrong and where? Can it be fixed? This course will largely focus on the issues of forced migration, displacement and refugees related to conflict, although this subject is inevitably intertwined with larger debates about citizenship and humanitarianism. Taking an interdisciplinary perspective, this course will address both scholarly and policy debates. Utilizing human rights scholarship, it will draw on work in history that charts the evolution of institutions; legal scholarship that outlines international and domestic laws; work in political science that seeks to understand responses in a comparative perspective, and anthropological studies that address how refugees understand these institutions and their experiences of exile and belonging. These topics are not only the purview of those in the academy, however. Investigative journalists have most recently provided trenchant coverage of the world's refugees, especially the current European crisis, where many have reported from the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Policy makers scramble to keep up with a crisis literally in motion. We will read their communiqués as well. While we will only begin to skim the surface of these issues, in this course you should expect to gain the following expertise: 1) Knowledge of the modern refugee regime and its origins 2) An analysis of actors and institutions who are tasked with responding to refugee crises and how their roles have changed 3) An understanding of a few critical historical case studies, both in the United States and abroad 4) Critical analysis of the current refugee crisis in Europe and the Middle East 5) Knowledge of the asylum process in the US and in comparative perspective 6) An understanding of the debates about conducting research with vulnerable populations such as refugees and displaced persons.

Fall 2021: HRTS GU4230

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HRTS GU4270 Social Media and Human Rights: Actors, Advocacy and Analytics. 3 points.
PRIORITY:HRSMA. GRAD & UNDERGRAD(3&4YR) ON 1ST DAY OF TERM

This course examines how changes in information and communications technology have, over the past two decades, fundamentally transformed the practices of civil society actors engaged with human rights issues. New communications tools such as Twitter, blogs, and Facebook have changed the ways that organizations communicate with their followers and seek to influence public debate. The increasing accessibility of analytic tools for researching and visualizing changing patterns of human rights abuse has empowered groups to better understand and respond more forcefully to these issues. Indeed, the use of social media as a communications tool has made it a data source for those monitoring and analyzing patterns of activity, in ways that draw increasingly on the techniques of big data analysis.

Spring 2021: HRTS GU4270
Course Number  Section/Call Number  Times/Location  Instructor  Points  Enrollment
HRTS 4270  001/11519  M 4:10pm - 6:00pm  Online Only  Ted Perlmutter  3  19/22

HRTS GU4500 SOCIO-ECONOMIC RIGHTS. 3 points.
Socio-economic rights have emerged from the margins into the mainstream of human rights. 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 socio-economic rights and examine their relevance in the United States as well as selected other countries, particularly those with progressive legislation, policies and jurisprudence.

HRTS GU4600 Human Rights in the Anthropocene. 3 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 the ways that organizations communicate with their followers and seek to influence public debate. The increasing accessibility of analytic tools for researching and visualizing changing patterns of human rights abuse has empowered groups to better understand and respond more forcefully to these issues. Indeed, the use of social media as a communications tool has made it a data source for those monitoring and analyzing patterns of activity, in ways that draw increasingly on the techniques of big data analysis.

Spring 2021: HRTS GU4600
Course Number  Section/Call Number  Times/Location  Instructor  Points  Enrollment
HRTS 4600  001/11523  Th 10:10am - 12:00pm  Noah Chasin  3  19/22

HRTS GU4650 Children's Rights Advocacy. 3 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 2021: HRTS GU4650
Course Number  Section/Call Number  Times/Location  Instructor  Points  Enrollment
HRTS 4650  001/12196  F 2:10pm - 4:00pm  Michael Bochenek, Je Becker  3  6/22

HRTS GU4810 Religion and Human Rights. 3 points.
Priority given to human rights studies M.A. students. Open to 3rd and 4th year undergraduates on first day of term with the instructor's permission.

The resurgence of religion over the past three decades has had a transformative influence globally and within nations. Religious nationalism, fundamentalism, and communalism have arisen to forcefully compete with secular democracy. With the fall of the Soviet bloc and the bilateralism of the Cold War, ethnic particularism, often of a religious character, has emerged as the locus of identity for people on all continents. These rapid changes engendered by a new, often commanding, role for religion challenge the very concept of individual and universal human rights. They raise difficult theoretical and painfully practical questions as to the preservation of individual human rights, and the relationship of democracy to religion. At the same time, recent currents such as economic globalization, the triumph of the free market, and the communications revolution promote individual autonomy, a cornerstone of human rights. There can be no doubt that religion will occupy an increasingly salient role in the social and political life of nations during the course of the 21st century. The relevance of religion to human rights in our time cannot be undervalued. The course examines the relationship of religion to human rights from several standpoints, including religion's role in abetting intolerance, religious minorities as victims of human rights violations, and religion as a framer of human rights ideals which inspire action.

Spring 2021: HRTS GU4810
Course Number  Section/Call Number  Times/Location  Instructor  Points  Enrollment
HRTS 4810  001/11524  Th 6:10pm - 8:00pm  Joseph Chuman  3  12/22
The 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). This seminar 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.

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.
HRTS GU4880 Human Rights in the United States. 3 points.
The United States sees itself as a country founded on the norms of equality under the law and inalienable rights but the modern reality is quite different. Police brutality in Ferguson, Executive Orders banning Muslims, protests at the Dakota Pipeline, the water crisis in Flint, Michigan, raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, high levels of domestic violence, wage stagnation, and the lack of a right to health care, all point to a human rights crisis at home. Some scholars have even argued that, for the majority of its citizens, the United States has the standards of a “third world” country.

In which areas are the most violations of human rights occurring and why? How have long term trends, including historical legacies, contributed to the current state of affairs? This survey course will provide an overview of contemporary human rights issues in the United States and will analyze them through the theoretical lenses of scholarship in the fields of comparative politics (including social movements) and law and society. It will outline the different actors in the human rights landscape, and focus on the various forms and strategies of mobilization around human rights issues with an eye to what has helped increase the enjoyment of rights.

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Spring 2021: HRTS GU4880

HRTS GU4340 Human Rights Accountability & Remedies. 3 points.
Not offered during 2021-22 academic year.

Effective remedies for violations of human rights is a core tenet of human rights law. Yet in practice, victims are rarely able to rely on formal accountability mechanisms to deliver remedies. This course examines how advocates combine political, legal and reputational accountability strategies to hold violators accountable where formal enforcement mechanisms are unavailable. The course will look beyond the international criminal legal system, and instead draw on case studies from contexts where the accountability gap is particularly stark: transnational actors who lack direct accountability relationships with rights-holders, including in international development, peacekeeping and corporate activities.

By delving into practical and tactical considerations, students will build an understanding of how various strategies work together to build a successful campaign for accountability that results in remedies for victims. Students will engage in simulated exercises in media advocacy, political lobbying, engaging with the UN human rights system, and public campaigning. Students will learn how to build empowering narratives that shape public opinion, center victims in their work, and nurture transnational partnerships to overcome power differentials. Through discussions grounded in both theory and practice, students will also critically interrogate the practice of human rights advocacy.

HRTS UN3994 Human Rights Senior Seminar: Research Methods. 4 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 2021: HRTS UN3994

HRTS GU4185 Human Rights and Global Economic Justice. 3 points.
The world economy is a patchwork of competing and complementary interests among and between governments, corporations, and civil society. These stakeholders at times cooperate and also conflict over issues of global poverty, inequality, and sustainability. What role do human rights play in coordinating the different interests that drive global economic governance? This seminar will introduce students to different structures of global governance for development, trade, labor, finance, the environment, migration, and intellectual property and investigate their relationship with human rights. Students will learn about public, private, and mixed forms of governance, analyze the ethical and strategic perspectives of the various stakeholders and relate them to existing human rights norms. The course will examine the work of multilateral organizations such as the United Nations and the International Financial Institutions, as well as international corporate and non-governmental initiatives.
HRTS GU4195 Topics in History, Memory and Transitional Justice. 3 points.

How do societies address their “bad pasts” in order to create “good futures” in the aftermath of conflict, state-sponsored repression, dictatorship, and genocide? Transitional Justice has generated numerous strategic and tactical approaches for redressing often irreparable harms. These include: international criminal tribunals, national or local legal proceedings, truth commissions, restitution, the accurate revision of history, public apologies, the establishment of monuments and museums, and official commemorations.

The aim of this course is to examine and analyze from a historical perspective the characteristics and problems of transitions from non-democratic/dictatorial/totalitarian/criminal political regimes to the beginnings of democracy and civil society. We shall focus on concepts and comparative cases, and current and past transitional justice-related questions, including historical reconciliation. We will study, among others, the experience of Germany at and after the Nuremberg proceedings, transitional justice in Africa, post-Soviet efforts at coming to terms with its Communist past, the ICTY/ICTR/ICC, amnesty and amnesia, and the legacy and memory of genocide and mass political repression. Students will gain a substantive framework for understanding the questions and challenges related to transitional justice today.

Of Related Interest

Please see the ISHR undergraduate course list for additional courses approved for the human rights major and concentration.