HUMAN RIGHTS

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

Departmental Website: http://humanrights.columbia.edu/education/undergraduate

Director of Undergraduate Studies: Prof. Glenn Mitoma, 61 Claremont Ave, 3rd floor. 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 humanrights@humanrightscolumbia.edu or call 646-745-8577.

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 3994 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 3996 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.

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 toward 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 3001</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION TO HUMAN RIGHTS</td>
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<tr>
<td>HRTS 3190</td>
<td>INT’L HUMAN RIGHTS LAW</td>
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<tr>
<td>HRTS 3995</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.

- 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.

** Concentration in Human Rights**

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

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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.

** 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 to commemorate, advocate against, or prevent the perpetration of genocide.

Fall 2024: HRTS UN3970
Course Number: 001/10539
Times/Location: W 10:10am - 12:00pm
Room: TBA
Instructor: Glenn Mitoma
Points: 3.00
Enrollment: 0/22

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 2024: HRTS UN3994
Course Number: 001/10643
Times/Location: W 2:10pm - 4:00pm
Room: TBA
Instructor: Tracey Holland
Points: 4.00
Enrollment: 0/22

HRTS UN3995 HUMAN RIGHTS SENIOR SEMINAR. 4.00 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.

Spring 2024: HRTS UN3995
Course Number: 001/10872
Times/Location: Th 10:10am - 12:00pm
Room: 401 Hamilton Hall
Instructor: Shourideh Molavi
Points: 4.00
Enrollment: 11/20

Fall 2024: HRTS UN3995
Course Number: 001/10540
Times/Location: Th 10:10am - 12:00pm
Room: TBA
Instructor: Shourideh Molavi
Points: 4.00
Enrollment: 0/20

HRTS UN3996 HUMAN RIGHTS THESIS SEMINAR. 3.00 points.
Priority given to human rights majors/concentrators.
Prerequisites: HRTS UN3995 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 2024: HRTS UN3996
Course Number: 001/10861
Times/Location: W 2:10pm - 4:00pm
Room: 408 Hamilton Hall
Instructor: Tracey Holland
Points: 3.00
Enrollment: 9/12

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 2024: HRTS GU4215
Course Number: 001/10541
Times/Location: T 4:10pm - 6:00pm
Room: TBA
Instructor: Louis Bickford
Points: 3.00
Enrollment: 0/22
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.

HRTS GU4470 SOCIAL MEDIA AND HUMAN RIGHTS. 3.00 points.
PRIORITY: HRSMA. GRAD & UNDERGRAD (3&4YR) ON 1ST DAY OF TERM

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?

HRTS GU4460 Climate Justice. 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 countries, particularly those with progressive legislation, policies and enforcement. 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?

HRTS GU4500 SOCIO-ECONOMIC RIGHTS. 3.00 points.

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 universality constructions of gay/trans identity and local formations of sexual and gender non-conformity, and legacies of colonialism.

HRTS GU4400 SEXUAL ORIENT, GENDR ID, HUM RTS. 3.00 points.
PRIORITY: HRSMA. GRAD & UNDERGRAD (3&4YR) ON 1ST DAY OF TERM
**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.

**Fall 2024: HRTS GU4600**

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**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 LBGT 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.

**Spring 2024: HRTS GU4915**

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**HRTS GU4930 INT’L HUMANITARIAN LAW/HUM RGTs. 4.00 points.**

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 2024: HRTS GU4930**

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contexts society. The close study of each case will assist students in illuminating the impact of GBV on human rights; and how GBV has been addressed in studies; highlighting the GBV associated with each case; examining the heart of the course will involve an intersectional analysis of specific case prevention to guard additional human beings from experiencing it. The security of those experiencing GBV; and to think about measures of the ideologies that drive and sustain GBV; examine in detail the harm and migration; and disaster and pandemics. It is critical to: interrogate ideological contexts, including: reproductive rights and health; trafficking (GBV) in several major categories traversing spatial, temporal, 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 interdisciplinary 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.

### Of Related Interest

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