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 (humanrightsed@columbia.edu)@columbia.edu (humanrightsed@columbia.edu).

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.

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 both 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 | | | |
|--------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 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.

### 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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**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 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 UN3995 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.

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.

Spring 2022: HRTS UN3995

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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 2022: HRTS UN3996

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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 2022: HRTS GU4215

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HRTS GU4270 Social Media and Human Rights: Actors, Advocacy and Analytics. 3 points.
PRIORITY: HRSMAS. 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 2022: HRTS GU4270

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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 in concrete cases. We will discuss developments on socio-economic rights in relation to tensions between universalist constructions of gay/trans identity and local formations of sexual and gender non-conformity, and legacies of colonialism.

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

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.

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.
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.

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.

The term ‘gendercide’ highlights a range of distinct and specific forms of violence executed against human beings based on their own gender 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.

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