



POLI 3505 – Foundations: Human Rights

Professor Leah Sarson

Winter 2021

Schedule:	Lectures will be live during our original course timeslot of Tuesdays/Thursdays 1:05-2:25 pm with the opportunity to participate synchronously. Lectures will be recorded and available asynchronously.
Location:	Online
Office Hours:	Online, by appointment (N.B. Office hours are opportunities to meet with your professor or TA to discuss the course material. Please don't hesitate to make use of them.)
Email:	Leah.Sarson@dal.ca
Course Website:	Brightspace
TAs:	TBD

A note for winter 2021: We are in extraordinary times and many of us are confronting extraordinary and very difficult circumstances. My focus this term is your academic success. If you are unable to complete course work or encounter other obstacles this term, please do not hesitate to reach out as soon as possible.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores human rights in theory and practice. It considers the necessities for human dignity and integrity of the person in the context of universal principles and values. We will study the ideas, laws, structures, and actors that influence how human rights are conceptualized and fulfilled. The first unit of the course introduces the concept of human rights, exploring their origins and the philosophies behind them. We consider the theories driving the contemporary human rights regime and examine how the international community translates human rights from theory to practice. The second unit focuses on the practice of human rights, exploring how rights are implemented, monitored, and enforced around the world. The third unit offers the opportunity to analyze specific challenges confronting the contemporary human rights regime. We assess how the deep contestation surrounding human rights affects their implementation, integrating case studies to analyze how rights are conceptualized, prioritized, and protected globally. We consider the international community's understandings of human rights, the decisions states make to enforce rights at home and abroad, actors beyond the state such as the United Nations, and key debates related to morality, cultural relativism, and humanitarian intervention. This interdisciplinary course provides a framework through which students can develop and articulate their own understandings and analyses of human rights.

Course objectives include:

- Identifying and defining the key concepts and ideas that shape the politics of human rights;

- Critically assessing the gaps between the theory and practice of human rights;
- Recognizing, analyzing, and responding to primary debates in the field;
- Encouraging curiosity about our own rights and responsibilities in the context of the course material.

Required Readings

In recognition of the difficulties – both tangible and financial – of acquiring textbooks during a pandemic, I have dispensed with a textbook in place of readings that are available either online or on our Brightspace page. Most journal articles and news media are available on the library website and most book chapters are available on our Brightspace page. I will not post scholarly articles readily available on the Dal library website because learning to access scholarly material is an essential element of a university education. The librarians are available if you have trouble sourcing articles.

Communication with the Professor

In all email communications with me, please include POLI 3505 in the subject line and proper greetings and salutations. Always sign-off with your full name. I will do my best to respond in 24 hours. standing mirror

Office hours are by appointment. Please use the booking system on our Brightspace page.

We will be using Brightspace. Please check it regularly for announcements, assignments, and other resources.

ASSESSMENT

1. Personal reflections on assigned readings/media (6 x 5% each = 30%) – *To be posted on the student's Brightspace group discussion board and due prior to the start of the following module. Each student must complete a minimum of six responses of approximately 500 words (two pages). Each reflection must engage with all the readings for the week. Students are encouraged to respond to the work of your group members. Select six modules from modules 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, or 12. Reflections will be marked based on depth of analysis, coherence, clarity, logic, and creativity.*
2. Midterm quiz (20%) – *Due Thursday, February 11 at 11:59 pm AST*
3. Film festival and discussion (20%) – *Week of March 16*
4. Final take-home exam (30%) – *Friday, April 16 at 11:59 pm ADT (*Please note: This is an exam and exam rules apply. No extensions will be offered except in the most extreme circumstances. The folder will close at 11:59 pm and you will not be able to submit after the deadline unless you have made prior arrangements.)*

Letter grades have a grade point assigned that is used to calculate your GPA (Grade Point Average). The following table explains and defines Dalhousie's grading system and shows the GPA value that corresponds with each letter grade.

Grade	Grade Point Value		Definition	Notes
A+	4.30	90-100	Excellent	Considerable evidence of original thinking; demonstrated outstanding capacity to analyze and synthesize; outstanding grasp of subject matter; evidence of extensive knowledge base.
A	4.00	85-89		
A-	3.70	80-84		
B+	3.30	77-79	Good	Evidence of grasp of subject matter, some evidence of critical capacity and analytical ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with the literature.
B	3.00	73-76		
B-	2.70	70-72		
C+	2.30	65-69	Satisfactory	Evidence of some understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems; benefitting from his/her university experience.
C	2.00	60-64		
C-	1.70	55-59		
D	1.00	50-54	Marginal Pass	Evidence of minimally acceptable familiarity with subject matter, critical and analytical skills (except in programs where a minimum grade of 'C' is required).
F	0.00	0-49	Inadequate	Insufficient evidence of understanding of the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytical skills; limited or irrelevant use of the literature.
INC	0.00		Incomplete	
W	Neutral and no credit obtained		Withdrew after deadline	
ILL	Neutral and no credit obtained		Compassionate reasons, illness	
P	Neutral		Pass	
TR	Neutral		Transfer credit on admission	
Pending	Neutral		Grade not reported	

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

At Dalhousie University, we are guided in our work by the values of academic integrity: honesty, trust, fairness, responsibility and respect (The Center for Academic Integrity, Duke University, 1999). As a student, you are required to demonstrate these values in the work you do. The University provides policies and procedures that every member of the university community is required to follow to ensure academic integrity.

At university we advance knowledge by building on the work of other people. Academic integrity means that we are honest and accurate in creating and communicating all academic products. Acknowledgement of other people's work must be done in a way that does not leave the reader in any doubt as to whose work it is. Academic integrity means trustworthy conduct such as not cheating on examinations and not misrepresenting information. It is the student's responsibility to seek assistance to ensure that these standards are met. We will be using Urkund in this class as a tool to avoid academic integrity issues.

In your work, please be sure to:

- Make sure you understand Dalhousie's policies on academic integrity. Please visit http://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/academic-integrity/academic-policies.html
- Do not cheat in examinations or write an exam or test for someone else.
- Clearly indicate the sources used in your written or oral work (including diagrams, videos, etc.).

- Do not use the work of another from the Internet or any other source and submit it as your own.
- When you use the ideas of other people (paraphrasing), make sure to acknowledge the source.
- Do not submit work that has been completed through collaboration or previously submitted for another assignment without permission from all instructors involved.
- This is not a comprehensive list. If you are ever unsure about any aspect of your academic work, please contact me or a TA. The library also offers services to help you ensure your academic integrity.
- Academia can be incredibly stressful. Whatever you do, do not be tempted to plagiarize or otherwise cheat. It is not worth it. Instructors are required to report every suspected offence.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

This classroom is a safe, equitable, and professional learning environment, in which students are encouraged to express their views in a collegial and respectful manner. To maintain a healthy learning environment, there is a zero-tolerance policy on discrimination and harassment of any sort.

Please familiarize yourself with the Dalhousie University rules and regulations on student rights and responsibilities, which can be found here: https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/safety-respect/student-rights-and-responsibilities.html

For students experiencing or anticipating barriers to their learning environments or other issues, please see the Accommodations Office. Accommodation levels the playing field to support your success. It reduces or removes barriers to your learning to ensure fair and equitable access to your classroom, testing or co-op/fieldwork environments. Accommodations can be introduced when a protected characteristic (as defined by provincial human rights legislation) may place you at a disadvantage compared to other students who are not affected by a protected characteristic. I encourage these students to work with the office to ensure that their needs are met.

If you face a serious unexpected challenge during the course for which you require special accommodations, please notify me as far in advance as possible.

STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

All course content will be available on Brightspace. This course is organized by units, with each unit comprising several modules. Some weeks will be heavier than others, but you can expect to read around 50-75 pages per week of scholarly material and popular media, view videos, listen to podcasts, review lecture slides, and complete small, regular assignments. I will lecture twice a week. You are welcome to attend synchronously, but I will also post the recordings to watch on your own time. There will be a take-home final exam.

Please note that while I have done my best to finalize the syllabus, it may be subject to changes as required.

Schedule and Assigned Readings

Unit 1 – Theory

This section provides an essential foundation to the key concepts, actors, and events that we discuss in this course. During these first few weeks, we will provide an overview of the contemporary international human rights regime. What are human rights? How do we understand universal human rights and why? By the end of this unit, you should be able to identify and define central concepts and critically link them to historical events.

Module 1. Introduction – January 8

Take the time to explore our course Brightspace page and consider what you would like to get out of the course. Please complete the survey on Brightspace.

Module 2. Definitions and Origins – January 12 & 14

- Donnelly, Jack. “The Concept of Human Rights (Chapter 1).” *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice* (hereafter UHRTP), 7-23. (Available on the library website)
- Moyn, Samuel, 2010. “Human Rights in History,” *The Nation*, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/human-rights-history/>
- Sussman, Alan. 2014. “Why Human Rights Are Called Human Rights.” *Ethics & International Affairs* 28 (2), 171–82.
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

Module 3. Philosophies and Foundations - January 19 & 21

- Tremblay, Reeta, James Kelly, Michael Lipson, and Jean Francois Mayer, 2008, “Introduction: Foundations of Human Rights,” In *Understanding Human Rights: Origins, Currents, and Critiques*. Toronto: Thomson Nelson.
- Langlois, Anthony, 2009, “Normative and Theoretical Foundations of Human Rights,” In *Human Rights: Politics and Practice*, ed. Michael Goodhart, OU, 11-27.
- Levy, Daniel, and Natan Sznaider, 2004. The institutionalization of cosmopolitan morality: The Holocaust and human rights. *Journal of Human Rights* 3(2):143-157
- Forsythe, David, 2017, “Establishing Human Rights Standards,” In *Human rights in international relations*. Cambridge University Press, 29-54.

Module 4. Questioning Foundations – January 26 & 28

- Mutua, Makau. 2001. “Savages, Victims, and Saviors: The Metaphor of Human Rights.” *Harvard International Law Journal* 42, 201-245.
- Ishay, Micheline, 2004, “What are Human Rights? Six Historical Controversies,” *Journal of Human Rights* 3.3: 359-371.
- Risse, Mathias, 2012, “Universalism vs. Relativism,” In *Global Political Philosophy*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 40-61.

Unit 2- Practice

This section of the course considers how the theories and ideas discussed in the previous section apply in the real world. By the end of the unit, you should be able to describe the contemporary human rights regime and identify and analyze some of the challenges to translating human rights

from theory to practice. How are the theories of human rights implemented, monitored, and enforced?

Module 5. Key Actors – February 2, 4, & 9

- 5.1. International Organizations and the United Nations
- 5.2. States and Foreign Policy
- 5.3. Non-governmental Organizations and Civil Society

- Mertus, Julie, “A Guide to the New UN Human Rights Practice,” In *The United Nations and Human Rights: A Guide for a New Era*, 2nd ed. Routledge: 1-8.
- Donnelly, Jack. “Human Rights and Foreign Policy” (Chapter 12). *UHRTP*, 197-213.
- Risse, T., & Ropp, S. 1999, “International human rights norms and domestic change: Conclusions.” In *The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change*, Eds. T. Risse, S. Ropp, & K. Sikkink, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 234-278.
- Podcast: Canadian Broadcasting Corp, 2019, “The Unconventional Diplomat: Breaking The Rules,” <https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1656560195971> (PART 1) and <https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1657131587708> (PART 2)
- Keck, Margaret E., and Kathryn Sikkink. 1999. “Transnational Advocacy Networks in International and Regional Politics.” *International Social Science Journal* 51 (159), 89-101.

Midterm quiz - February 11

The quiz will open at 8:00 am ADT and close at 11:59 ADT. Once you begin the quiz, you will have 90 minutes to submit it. The quiz is open-book.

February 16 & 18: No Class (reading week)

Module 6. Implementation and Monitoring - February 23 & 25

- Smith, Rhona. “Monitoring, Implementing, and Enforcing Human Rights,” *International Human Rights Law*, 8th ed. Oxford University Press, 156-181.
- Hafner-Burton, E. M. and Tsutsui, K., 2007, “Justice Lost! The Failure of International Human Rights Law to Matter Where Needed Most,” *Journal of Peace Research* 44.4: 407–425.
- Video: Williams, Kerry, 2019, “Figuring out the Who, Where, How and What to Implement UNDRIP in Canada,” Centre for International Governance Innovation, <https://www.cigionline.org/multimedia/figuring-out-who-where-how-and-what-implement-undrip-canada>

Module 7. Enforcement – March 2 & 4

- 7.1. Humanitarian Intervention and the Responsibility to Protect
- 7.2. Tribunals and Truth Commissions

- Welsh, Jennifer M. 2016. “The Responsibility to Protect after Libya & Syria.” *Daedalus*, 145(4), 75-87.
- Jo, Hyeran, and Beth A. Simmons, 2016, “Can the International Criminal Court Deter Atrocity?” *International Organization* 70.3: 443–75.

- Arendt, Hannah, 1963, “Eichmann in Jerusalem,” *The New Yorker*, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1963/02/16/eichmann-in-jerusalem-i>
- Video: Michael Walzer on Just War Theory, *Big Think*, August 29, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LcBovmGZSPU&t=61s>
- Video: Michael Walzer on Just War in Iraq, *Big Think*, April 23, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_1rqRYaQn-A
- Mackinnon, Mark, “Anwar and Anwar: How a chance encounter helped lead to a watershed trial linked to Syrian conflict,” *The Global and Mail*, April 24, 2020.

Module 8. Contemporary Challenges to the Human Rights Regime – March 9 & 11

- Schultz, William and Sushma Raman, 2020. “Why Rights Change,” In *The Coming Good Society: Why New Realities Demand New Rights*, Harvard University Press, 1-25.
- Schippers, Birgit, 2018, “Why technology puts human rights at risk,” *The Conversation*, <https://theconversation.com/why-technology-puts-human-rights-at-risk-92087>.
- Soh, Changrok, Daniel Connolly and Seunghyun Nam, 2018, “Time for a Fourth Generation of Human Rights?,” *United Nations Research Institute for Social Development*, <https://www.unrisd.org/TechAndHumanRights-Soh-et-al%5E>
- Neuman, Gerald L. 2020, “Populist Threats to the International Human Rights System.” In *Human Rights in a Time of Populism: Challenges and Responses*, ed. Gerald L. Neuman, 1–19. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://www-cambridge-org.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/DFB3520DD9D455FC66DCF1986243AE7B/9781108485494c1_1-19.pdf/populist_threats_to_the_international_human_rights_system.pdf

Unit 3 – Application and Case Studies

The following weeks provide the opportunity to focus on the people behind the theories and practices of human rights. Who protects and who is protected? What does protected mean? What are the obstacles to realizing universal human rights? By the end of this unit, you should be able to identify human rights violations in accounts of world events and to analyze the international community’s response. You should be comfortable articulating and supporting your own ideas about the contemporary human rights regime.

Module 9. Human Rights on Film – March 16 & 18

- Film Festival Assignment

Module 10. Human Rights in Canada - March 23

- Jeffrey, Brooke, 2016, “The Evolution of Human Rights in Canada,” In *Human Rights: Current Issues and Controversies*, ed. Gordon DiGiacomo, Toronto: U of T Press.
- Chapnick, Adam, 2020, “Canada’s Campaign for a Seat on the United Nations Security Council: The Historical Context,” *Canadian Global Affairs Institute*, https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/cdfai/pages/4359/attachments/original/1580165318/Canadas_Campaign_for_a_Seat_on_the_United_Nations_Security_Council_The_Historical_Context.pdf?1580165318.

- Human Rights Watch, 2020, “Canada: Events of 2019,” <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/canada>.

Module 11. Human Rights in 2021 – March 25 & 30

- Select three articles from 2019-2021 in *The New York Times* database on Human Rights and Human Rights Violations: <https://www.nytimes.com/topic/subject/human-rights-and-human-rights-violations>
- Select one scholarly article (not a book review) related to human rights from 2019-2021 in *Journal of Human Rights*, *Human Rights Quarterly*, *Ethics and International Affairs*, *Third World Quarterly*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *International Organization* or other political science/international relations/law/history/anthropology journal.
- Rajat Khosla, 2020, “This year has demonstrated what human rights are for,” *Amnesty International*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/12/2020-has-shown-what-human-rights-are-for/>
- Pearson, Elaine and Louise Chappell, 2019, “5 human rights issues that defined 2019,” *The Conversation*, <https://theconversation.com/5-human-rights-issues-that-defined-2019-126939>.

Guest Lecture – April 1

- TBD

Module 12. Looking to the Future – April 6

- Video: “Professor Kathryn Sikkink: Evidence for Hope, Making Human Rights Work in the 21st Century,” *King’s College London Law*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrIhsk_AeEc
- “A Discussion of Kathryn Sikkink’s Evidence for Hope: Making Human Rights Work in the 21st Century,” *Perspectives on Politics*, 17(3), pp. 810-819.
 - Includes:
 - Hillebrecht, C.: 810–11.
 - Hopgood, S.: 812–813.
 - Hafner-Burton, E.: 814–815.
 - Moyn, S.: 816–817.
 - Brysk, A.: 818–819

Please note: while I have done my best to finalize the syllabus, some changes may be possible.