

COURSE SYLLABUS
POLI 4505- HUMAN RIGHTS: LEGAL ISSUES

Instructor: Dr. Igor Shoikhedbrod
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Office Hours (MS Teams): Tuesdays and Wednesdays 10:00-11:00a.m ADT.

Term: Fall 2021
Day: Thursdays
Time: 8:35-11:25 ADT
Location:
Collaborate
Ultra.

Students are asked to schedule an appointment in advance via email to ensure fairness and equal access.

*The instructor will normally be responding to logistical questions by email within 48 hours, Mondays through Fridays, between 10a.m and 5:00p.m ADT (i.e. not on weekends or during statutory holidays). For substantive course content-related questions, please make an appointment with the course instructor during the instructor's scheduled MS Teams office hours.

A. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar course focuses on the legal issues and debates that are implicated in the development and enforcement of domestic and international human rights. It will address the changing legal status of international human rights treaties and conventions, with attention to the work of international treaty bodies, courts, tribunals, and the implications of their decisions and recommendations in domestic contexts. It will look at the impact of the development of international criminal courts and tribunals – with attention to the debates concerning state sovereignty and accountability, and what enables or restricts intervention in human rights crises. A central theme of the course will be theories and approaches to justice, and their relation to the force of law and the challenges of legal systems and obligations.

FORMAT: Online Synchronous Seminar via Collaborate Ultra.

PREREQUISITES: Previous third year course work in Political Science or Law, Justice & Society.

B. COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the end of this course, you will be able to:

- i. Explain key principles and prevailing assumptions of international human rights law.
- ii. Differentiate between the regional and international enforcement of human rights, including the various challenges involved in enforcement.
- iii. Analyze the historical transformation of human rights law and the consequences of this transformation.
- iv. Consider the future trajectory of international human rights law.
- v. Effectively communicate your assessment of pressing issues in international human rights law and its relevance domestically.

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C. REQUIRED TEXT AND MATERIALS

Rhona K.M. Smith, *International Human Rights Law: 9th edition* (Oxford University Press, 2020). Available for purchase at the University Bookstore and online.
N.B. Additional required readings will be posted on Brightspace (B).

D. EVALUATION COMPONENTS AND WEIGHTS

Components

The course will be delivered entirely online via Collaborate Ultra. Work will be evaluated on an individual basis. Except for formally volunteering as a note-taker for the course, which is strongly encouraged, students are discouraged from sharing their individual work on online platforms (i.e., do not share individual work on Facebook Groups, Google Drive, Discord, Dropbox, etc.). In the past, such sharing of individual work has resulted in incidents of plagiarism and academic misconduct.

The course assessment will be determined as follows:

List of Components	Percent of Total Grade
<u>Four 600 Word Reactions</u> to assigned readings on weeks with * due on Brightspace at 6:00p.m ADT the day before our seminar (on Wednesdays at 6:00p.m. ADT for weeks with*).	10%/reaction 40% when combined
<u>Book Review of 1000 Words</u> on a scholarly book focusing on international human rights law that was published within the last 10 years (Due on Nov 4 at the start of seminar)	15%
Essay of 2500 Words (Due on November 25 at start of seminar).	30%
Active Online Participation (not mere attendance) & Concluding Symposium Presentation	10% Active Online Participation 5% Symposium Presentation
TOTAL OF ALL COMPONENTS	100%

***Recommended essay topics will be provided in advance by the course instructor.**

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Grade Determination

Letter grade	Numerical equivalent	GPA	Definition	
A+	90-100	4.3	Excellent	Considerable evidence of original thinking; demonstrated outstanding capacity to analyze and synthesize; outstanding grasp of subject matter; evidence of extensive knowledge base.
A	85-89	4.0		
A-	80-84	3.7		
B+	77-79	3.3	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	73-76	3.0		
B-	70-72	2.7		
C+	65-69	2.3	Satisfactory	Evidence of some understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems; benefiting from university experience.
C	60-64	2.0		
C-	55-59	1.7		
D	50-54	1.0	Marginal pass	Evidence of minimally acceptable familiarity with subject matter; critical and analytical skills (except in programs where a minimum grade of “C” or “C+” is required).
F	0-49	0	Inadequate	Insufficient evidence of understanding of the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytical skills; limited or irrelevant use of literature

E. COURSE-SPECIFIC POLICIES

The Use of Course Materials

Lectures and course materials prepared by the instructor are the instructor’s intellectual property and are covered by the Canadian Copyright Act. Students wishing to record lectures or other course materials in any way (this includes tape recording, filming, photographing PowerPoint slides, Brightspace materials, etc.,) are required to ask the instructor’s explicit permission. It is absolutely forbidden for a student to post, publish, or circulate the instructor’s work on a website or to sell them in other forms without formal permission.

Online Seminar Attendance and General Expectations

Substantial and constructive dialogue on challenging issues is an important part of academic inquiry and exchange. It requires willingness to listen and tolerance of opposing points of view. Consideration of individual differences and alternative viewpoints is required of all class members, towards each other, towards instructors, and towards guest speakers. While expressions of differing perspectives are welcome and encouraged, the words and language used should remain within acceptable bounds of civility and respect.

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Brightspace will be the main online space for the course. This is where lectures will be delivered, assignments will be posted and submitted, and where all course announcements will be posted. It is expected that students will log-on to Brightspace regularly and set their email accounts to receive course announcements.

Active online participation is essential for success in this course. The instructor will begin the seminar by providing a 20 minute overview of important ideas and concepts from the assigned readings. The remaining time will be devoted to questions of clarification and elaboration, as well as ample time for class and breakout group discussions. We will also observe a 5-10 minute break midway through the seminar.

Written skills are important in this course. Proficiency in English therefore is assumed. Writing support is available for students at Dalhousie University. Students are strongly encouraged to seek out this support ahead of time.

Accessibility

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have accessibility-related needs that may require accommodations, please feel free to contact me and/or Student Accessibility Services as soon as possible:

https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/accessibility.html

Submission of Work and the Use of Urkund

All assignments will be administered entirely through Brightspace. All submissions will be verified on Urkund for textual similarity. The terms that apply to Dalhousie University's use of Urkund are specified online: https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/academic-integrity/faculty-resources/urkund--plagiarism-detection.html

Missed Assignments

If you miss class, it is your responsibility to catch up with missed lecture and reading material. No extensions will be granted on assignments unless students have formal supporting documentation explaining why they were unable to fulfill the requirements. Examples of formal supporting documentation include medical notes issued by a certified physician/practitioner, as well as a completed absence declaration form. If you are absent from class or unable to complete any other term work, you are responsible for contacting your instructor as soon as possible to request reasonable accommodation. Extensions will only be granted under *extraordinary* and *unforeseen* circumstances. Appropriate documentation must be submitted within 5 days of the missed course requirement. Please note that all course requirements must be fulfilled for the completion of the course.

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Late Penalty

Late assignment submissions will be penalized 5% percent per day of lateness (weekends included).

Procedure for Appealing Assignment Grades

Should you have legitimate concerns regarding assignment grades, you are welcome to submit a half-page typed appeal that explains the reasons why you are contesting the grade (to be submitted to the instructor no later than 5 days, weekends included, past the date that you received your assignment grade). Please note that the re-evaluation of an assignment may result in a higher or lower grade, or the grade may remain the same.

F. University Policies, Statements, Guidelines, and Other Resources for Support

This course is governed by the academic rules and regulations set forth in the University Calendar and the Senate.

University Statements

Territorial Acknowledgment

Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq. We are all Treaty people.

Academic Integrity

At Dalhousie University, we are guided in all of 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 all of 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.

Student Code of Conduct

Everyone at Dalhousie is expected to treat others with dignity and respect. The Code of Student Conduct allows Dalhousie to take disciplinary action if students do not follow this community expectation.

Students are required to comply with health and safety requirements on campus, and should be considerate of others' health concerns. Non-compliance may be reported under the Code of Student Conduct.

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Diversity and Inclusion – Culture of Respect

Every person at Dalhousie has a right to be respected and safe. We believe inclusiveness is fundamental to education. We stand for equality. Dalhousie is strengthened in our diversity. We are a respectful and inclusive community. We are committed to being a place where everyone feels welcome and supported, which is why our Strategic Direction prioritizes fostering a culture of diversity and inclusiveness (Strategic Priority 5.2).

Recognition of Mi'kmaq Territory

Dalhousie University would like to acknowledge that the University is on Traditional Mi'kmaq Territory. The Elders in Residence program provides students with access to First Nations elders for guidance, counsel and support. Visit their office at:

Room 107, Indigenous Student Centre

1321 Edward Street

Phone: (902) 494-6803

University Policies and Programs

- Important Dates in the Academic Year

http://www.dal.ca/academics/important_dates.html

- University Grading Practices: Statement of Principles and Procedures

https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/policies/academic/grading-practicespolicy.html

- Scent-Free Program

<https://www.dal.ca/dept/safety/programs-services/occupational-safety/scent-free.html>

Learning and Support Resources

- General Academic Support - Academic Advising: https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/advising.html

- Copyright and Fair Dealing: <https://libraries.dal.ca/services/copyright-office/fairdealing/fair-dealing-guidelines.html>

- Libraries: <http://libraries.dal.ca>

- Student Health Services: https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/health-and-wellness/services-support/student-health-and-wellness.html

- Counselling and Psychological Services: <https://www.dal.ca/counselling>

- Black Student Advising: https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/communities/blackstudent-advising.html

- Indigenous Student Centre: https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/communities/indigenous.html

- eLearning Website: <https://www.dal.ca/dept/elearning.html>

- Student Advocacy Services: <http://www.dsu.ca/dsas>

- Dalhousie Ombudsperson: https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/safety-respect/student-rights-and-responsibilities/where-to-get-help/ombudsperson.html

- Writing Centre: https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/writing-andstudy-skills.html. Assistance with learning to write academic documents, reviewing papers for discipline -specific writing standards, organization, argument, transitions, writing styles and citations.

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- Studying for Success program and tutoring: https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/study-skills-and-tutoring.html

G. READING SCHEDULE

IMPORTANT NOTE: All additional required readings will be uploaded onto Brightspace (B).

Week 1

Sept 9 (Thursday) **Introduction, syllabus overview, and poll on seminar start time**

Week 2

Sept 16 (Thursday) **Introduction, historical background, and the United Nations**
Ch. 1, 2 & 3 of *International Human Rights Law*.

Week 3

Sept 23 (Thursday) **The historical transformation of human rights and challenges of enforcement***
T.H Marshall, excerpts from “Citizenship and Social Class” (B).
Chaps 5 & 9 of *International Human Rights Law*.

Week 4

Sept 30 (Thursday) **National Day for Truth and Reconciliation—No Class.**

Week 5

Oct 7 (Thursday) **The right to life and freedom from torture and cruel punishment***

Chaps 13 and 17 of *International Human Rights Law*.

Week 6

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Oct 14 (Thursday) **Liberty of the Person & Freedom of Expression**
Chaps 14 and 20 of *International Human Rights Law*.

Week 7

Oct 21 (Thursday) **Equality of the Person and Non-Discrimination**
Chaps 11, 12, and 15 of *International Human Rights Law*.
Recommended Reading: C. Mills, “The Political Economy of Personhood” (B).

Week 8

Oct 28 (Thursday) **Indigenous Peoples’ Rights and Rights to Self-Determination***
Ch.18 & 19 of *International Human Rights Law*.
Review [UNDRIP](#).

Week 9

Nov 4 (Thursday) **Housing: Human Right or Commodity?**
We will watch the *Push* documentary synchronously and then discuss it as a class.
Book Review Due at the Start of Seminar.

Week 10

Nov 11 **Study week (no class)**

Nov 18 (Thursday) **The Future of Socio-Economic Rights***
Chaps 16, 21, and 22 of *International Human Rights Law*.
S. Moyn, “A Powerless Companion: Human Rights in the Age of Neoliberalism” (B)
Recommended: Review the [ICESC](#).

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Week 12

Nov 25 (Thursday)
(Presentations 1)

Concluding Symposium on Human Rights

Essay Due at the Start of Seminar.

Week 13

Dec 2 (Thursday)
Presentations (2)

Concluding Symposium on Human Rights