1-Course Description and Objectives

This course examines the historical, conceptual and legal development of human rights from the 13th century to the present, focusing on the shift from natural law to natural rights and finally human rights. In addition, the course seeks to address and discuss the major philosophical debates in the area of human rights in modern times.

Scholars are far from unanimous on various issues including the very idea of a universal list of human rights for all. They disagree on whether political and civil rights should be given primacy over socio-economic rights, or whether individual rights are enough to secure the rights of the minorities. A major debate has also ensued regarding women’s rights and whether the practice of their rights conflicts with cultural and religious rights, as appears to be the case in so many communities. Legal rules and ethical norms regarding intervention inside nation states when, for example, ethnic cleansing is taking place, are matter of continuing debate. Scholars have also discussed the emergence of new rights, like environmental rights. All of these issues and more will be addressed, discussed and debated in this course.

2-Required Reading:

3-Recommended Readings:

Also:

FOR ALL ADDITIONAL READINGS CHECK OUT THE LAST PAGE OF THIS SYLLABUS.
4-Subjects

I-Background:

Jan 6: Introductions

Jan 13 Subject One: Part One: Definition, Philosophical Evolution of Human Rights: From Natural law to Natural Rights

Readings:
- Patrick Hayden, *The Philosophy of Human Rights*, 3-13; 57-88; 109-136;

Graduates: (In addition graduates should read:)

Jan 20 Subject 2: Part Two: Philosophical evolution of human rights from natural rights to human rights

Readings:

Jan 27, Subject 3: Historical and Legal Evolution of Human Rights:

Readings:
- Brian Tierney, “Historical Roots of Modern Rights,” in *Rethinking Rights: Historical, Political, and Philosophical Perspectives* (ed.) Bruce P. Frohnen and Kenneth L. Grasso (Missouri, The University of Missouri, 2009

Graduates:
- Mahoney, *The Challenge of Human Rights*, 43-46; 140-147; 151-6

II-Challenges and Debates:

Feb 3, Subject 4: Universalism versus Relativism: Is Human Rights Universal, or are they relative depending on cultural values?
Readings:
- Patrick Hayden, *The Philosophy of Human Rights*, 379-397; 397-409; 409-423
- Donnelly, *Universal Human Rights*, 93-103

Graduates:

Feb 10, Subject 5: Political and Civil Rights or Social and Economic rights? The debates on their hierarchy (if any) and whether the West really undermined the economic, social and cultural rights.

Readings:

For graduates:

Feb 24, Subject 6: Debates on Minority Rights (Are individual rights enough to secure the rights of the minorities? Do we need a new approach that is based on multiculturalism to deal with the new challenges in the world?)

Readings:

Graduates:
March 3, Subject 7: Women’s Rights Debates (specifically whether they conflict with cultural rights, and what is to be done about domestic violence and the use of women and girls as a tactic of war)

Readings:

For graduates:

March 10, Subject 8: Ethnic cleansing and humanitarian intervention (to be assigned)

March 17, Subject 9: Human rights and the Environment (to be assigned)

March 24, Conclusions

March 31: Exam

5- Evaluation Profile:

Class Participation: 10%
Essay: 25%
Presentation 1: 15%
Presentation 2: 15%
Final Exam: 35%

6- Final Exam: March 31st

This exam will be held in class. It will consist of three questions, where you have to answer two. The answers should be written in a short-essay form. You are strongly advised to start reviewing the material from day one. This way you will have the opportunity not only to understand the material better but also to prepare for the exam more effectively.

The exam will cover the class lectures and the required readings. I strongly advise students, especially graduate students, to read as much as they can from the “Additional Readings list” as it will enrich your understanding and analysis. It will
also assist you in your research for your essays, as the readings are organized according to the subjects that we are going to cover. If you have any question on any of the issues covered, please do not hesitate to ask me.

7-Essay Project

Students are required to write an argumentative essay-project. You can choose any human right’s issue that is of interest to you and write about it. It should be no more than a ten-page paper (excluding bibliography), double-spaced; font should be 12 Times New Roman. You will be marked on the breadth of the material you cover, and your ability to discuss it clearly in support of your chosen argument. The format and the proper documentation of your essay will be also taken into account in the marking. Please remember that PLAGIARISM IS THEFT. The student will receive a ZERO if he/she copied his/her essay from another author. Any information or analysis taken from any source should be properly documented.

8-TWO Presentations

From February 3 to March 24 we will have our round-table human rights debates. Each week two students will present to us two opposing views on a human right’s issue. What happens here is that in the second week of the semester I will ask each attending student to choose TWO topics of interest from the subject list. I will then assign presentation dates. It is the RESPONSIBILITY OF THE STUDENT to ensure that he/she has two presentation topics.

9-Participation & Attendance

Attendance is of great importance in this class and so is participation and they will make a difference in the final mark. Participation includes not only answering the professor’s questions in class, but also asking questions and discussing issues and analyzing concepts in class.

Please do not hesitate to email me or visit me during my office hours to discuss any of your concerns.
ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READINGS:

Subject One: Definition, Philosophical Evolution Part I:


Subject Two: Part Two: Philosophical Evolution: From Natural Rights to Human Rights:


Tenzin Gyatso (14th Dalai Lama) “Human Rights, democracy and Freedom,” *His


Subject Three: Historical and Legal Evolution of Human Rights:

Brian Tierney, The Idea of Natural Rights (Cambridge and Michigan, Emory University, 1997).


Lynn Hunt, “Inventing Human Rights” University of California Television. March 7, 2008 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZVD1G4q0bA


Subject Four: Universalism vs. Relativism:


Alasdair MacIntyre “Lecture of Human Rights,” London Metropolitan University, Nov 18th, 2011


Buergenthal et al., International Human Rights in a Nutshell, 39-40.


Subject Five: Civil and Political Rights and/or Social Economic and Cultural Rights:


Alex Kirkup and Tony Evans, “The Myth of Western Opposition to Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights?: A Reply to Whelan and Donnelly,” Human Rights Quarterly 31 no 1, (Feb 2009), 221-237


Subject Six: Minority Rights:


Subject Eight: Women’s Rights’ Debates: