



## FALL 2025 COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Number: 297-001  
Course Title: International Human Rights (W)  
Credit Hours: 3  
Grading Mode: Letter grade  
Meeting Time(s): MON/WED, 1:50-3:50  
Meeting Mode: ON CAMPUS  
Exam Time(s): N/A  
Exam Mode: N/A  
Prerequisite(s): N/A  
Corequisite(s): N/A  
Instructor(s):  
EWA REJMAN

Contact Info:  
TBD

### Reading(s) & Supplement(s):

International Human Rights by Philip Alston (NYU Law, 2024) [This is [freely available online](#)].  
Supplementary readings will be assigned and distributed by email.

### Course Overview

This course offers a comprehensive overview of the international human rights law, from its historical origins to modern institutions and enforcement mechanisms. Through the study of primary legal texts, case law, and thematic analysis, students will explore how universal and regional systems protect civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights; assess available remedies for violations; and engage with contemporary critiques and emerging challenges. The knowledge acquired in this course is not intended to remain purely theoretical, but instead, students will be encouraged to apply legal principles to concrete cases of human rights violations in order to identify human rights-compliant solutions in given circumstances.

### Course Learning Outcomes

Students will understand the historical development and institutional frameworks of international human rights law and analyze how universal and regional systems protect different categories of rights. They will also apply legal principles to assess and respond to real-life human rights violations and engage critically with contemporary debates and challenges in the field. Through completing their assignments, they will learn how to conduct independent research and present well-argued written work on human rights topics.

## Grading Policies

Assessment will be based on class participation (20%), a midterm group case study assignment (30%), and a final research paper of approximately 30-35 double-spaced pages on a topic approved in advance (50%). Students are expected to complete the assigned readings prior to class, actively engage in discussion, and demonstrate a capacity for critical analysis and application of the material.

## Classroom Policies

**Attendance:** Per AR 3-1.4, “maintenance of matriculation requires regular class preparation, participation and attendance, registration in the course of study required for the student’s program (full-time or part-time), successive registration for each fall and spring term of each academic year until study is completed, and compliance with all other relevant requirements.”

**Absences:** Per AR 4-1.1, “if a student is absent for any reason for more than 20 percent of the sessions of a course, the student is not eligible for credit in that course. A student who is not present for at least 75 percent of a session of the course is absent from that session.”

### Assignments:

On October 1, I will release a case study based on a concrete real-life scenario involving human rights violations. Students will have one week to work on the assignment in groups of two or three, answer the questions, and submit their responses. These will later be discussed in class. In addition, students will write a research paper on a topic of their choice based on the course content. The topic must be approved by me no later than October 13. Students may consult with me regarding their paper outline until the end of October.

### Use of Technology & AI:

Generative AI tools may be used in this course for the following purposes, and with the following guidelines. Students may use AI in this course to brainstorm, study, or outline, but may not use AI as the primary source for research or when they are participating in any class discussion. Students must use AI tools responsibly, verify facts presented by AI, disclose when AI tools are used to create course work product, properly cite any AI tools utilized, and should be prepared to produce the transcript of prompts and responses upon request. Misuse will be treated as a violation of academic standards.

## Course Schedule & Assignments

### 8/18 - 1<sup>st</sup> class: Introduction

Handbook pp. 77-82 (general principles and state responsibility), pp. 97-102 (treaties), pp. 104-110 (The Nuremberg Trial)

### 8/20 - 2<sup>nd</sup> class: Human dignity, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and claims to universality

Paolo Carozza, [\*Human Dignity and the Foundations of Human Rights\*](#)

Michael Ignatieff, *Human Rights as Politics* 3-47 (2001).

### 8/25 - 3<sup>rd</sup> class: Continuation of Human Dignity, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and claims to universality

[\*S.A.S. v. France\*](#) (European Court of Human Rights, *excerpts*) (especially paras. 10-27, 76-85, 106-163)

[\*Yaker v. France\*](#) (Human Rights Committee, *excerpts*) (especially paras. 2.1-3.15 and 7.1-11).

Oswaldo R. Ruiz-Chiriboga, *Indigenous Corporal Punishment in Ecuador and the Prohibition of Torture and Ill Treatment* (pp. 975-995, 1014-1016).

### 8/27 - 4<sup>th</sup> class: Religious and cultural traditions and human rights

Walter Kasper, *The Theological Foundation of Human Rights*, in HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE CHURCH (1990), pp. 47-71

Ebrahim Moosa, *The Dilemma of Islamic Human Rights Schemes*, 15 JOURNAL OF LAW AND RELIGION, (2000-2001), especially pp. 191-211

Makau wa Mutua, *The Banjul Charter and the African Cultural Fingerprint: An Evaluation of the Language of Duties*, 35 VA. J. INT'L L. (1994), especially pp. 339-346.

### 9/3 - 5<sup>th</sup> class: Universal Human Rights System

Handbook pp. 567-577 (overview, Human Rights Council, High Commissioner on Human Rights), pp. 600-634 (Special Procedures, Universal Periodic Review).

### 9/8 - 6<sup>th</sup> class: ICJ and human rights

Bruno Simma, *International Court of Justice* (especially pp. 151-166)

ICJ: Allegations of Genocide under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Ukraine v. Russian Federation) – *excerpts*

ICJ: Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel) – *excerpts*

9/10 - 7th class: Regional human rights systems : European, Inter-American and African

Handbook pp. 752-765, 811-818 (European system)

Janneke Gerards, *Margin of Appreciation and Incrementalism in the Case Law of the European Court of Human Rights*, 18 **HUM. RTS. L. REV.** 495 (2018)

9/15 - 8th class – Continuation of the regional human rights systems

Handbook pp. 820-826, 829-835 (Inter-American system), pp. 847-834 (African system)

Ezgi Yildiz, *Enduring Practices in Changing Circumstances: A Comparison of the European Court of Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights* (especially pp. 310-315 and 331-335).

9/17 - 9th class: Indivisibility of rights

Thomas M. Antkowiak, *A “Dignified Life” and the Resurgence of Social Rights* (especially pp.8-23)

Evelyne Schmid, *Taking Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Seriously in International Criminal Law* (Introduction, pp.1-14)

[M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece](#) (paras 9-30, 216-234 on violations of Article 3 of ECHR)

9/22 - 10th class: Tripartite framework of states' obligations and limitations and dérogations of rights

Handbook: pp. 362-375 (derogations in emergencies)

Henry Shue, *Basic Rights: Subsistence, Affluence, and U.S. Foreign Policy: 40th Anniversary Edition*, 2020, 35-64.

9/24 - 11th class: Right to life and freedom from inhumane and degrading treatment

Human Rights Committee, General comment [No. 36 on article 6: right to life](#)

[Case of Velásquez-Rodríguez v. Honduras](#) (July 29, 1988, Merits), especially paras 147-188)

[ICC arrest warrant for Rodrigo Duterte](#) (ongoing case)

9/29 - 12th class: Freedom of religion and freedom of speech

[Lautsi v. Italy](#) (paras. 10-16, 33-46, 57-81)

[Submission by Prof. Joseph Weiler](#)

Jacob Mchangama and Natalie Alkiviadou, *Hate Speech and the European Court of Human Rights: Whatever Happened to the Right to Offend, Shock or Disturb?* (2021) (especially pp. 1015 – 1033)

10/1 - 13th class: Economic and social rights – key notions and obligations

Handbook pp. 267-290, 302-308.

10/6 - 14th class: Right to the highest attainable standard of health

UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, [General Comment No. 14: The Right to the Highest Attainable Standard of Health](#) (Art. 12 of the Covenant)

Thana de Campos, The Well-being Conception of Health and the Conflation Problem, 22 *New Bioethics* 71 (2016).

CEDAW Committee: [Alyne da Silva Pimentel v. Brazil](#) (especially paras 1-3.18, 7.1-9)

10/8 - 15th class: Presentation and discussion of case studies

10/15 - 16th class: CEDAW and women's rights

Handbook pp. 164-166 (public/private divide in case of violence), 177-181 (affirmative action and quotas)

Susanne Burri, [Protection and rights related to pregnancy and maternity in EU law](#)

Siobhán Mullally, CEDAW Reservations and Contested Equality Claims, in *Frontiers of Gender Equality Transnational Legal Perspective* (Rebecca J. Cook eds. 2023), especially pp. 88-100.

10/20 - 17th class: The concept of vulnerability and specialized conventions

Mikaela Heikkilä, Hisayo Katsui & Maija Mustaniemi-Laakso, *Disability and vulnerability: a human rights reading of the responsive state*, 24 INT'L J. HUM. RTS. 1180 (2020).

Seyla Benhabib, *The End of the 1951 Refugee Convention? Dilemmas of Sovereignty, Territoriality, and Human Rights*, 2 JUS COGENS 27 (2020).

10/22 - 18th class: Environmental rights and the right to development

Handbook pp. 1024-1039, 1071-1078

African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, [\*SERAC v. Nigeria\*](#)

10/27 - 19th class: Extraterritorial obligations of states

Report of the UN Independent Expert on Human Rights and International Solidarity, Obiora Chinedu Okafor, [\*International solidarity and the extraterritorial application of human rights: prospects and challenges\*](#) (2022)

International Court of Justice, [\*Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory\*](#) (2004) (excerpts)

10/29 - 20th class: Enforcement and implementation

Handbook: pp. 878-917 (internalization, sanctions and universal jurisdiction)

11/3 - 21st class: Humanitarian assistance and Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

Handbook pp. 634-640 (R2P).

Gareth Evans, [\*The Responsibility to Protect: An Idea Whose Time Has Come ... and Gone?\*](#) (edited lecture)

**Knut Dörmann & Tristan Ferraro, Humanitarian Assistance, in *The Handbook of International Humanitarian Law* 351, 351–59 (Dieter Fleck ed., 4th ed. 2021).**

11/5 - 22nd class: International humanitarian law and Refugee Law

Azubike Onuora-Oguno, *Migration, Refugees, Asylum and Uprooted Peoples' Rights*, in THE SAGE HANDBOOK OF HUMAN RIGHTS (Anja Mihr and Mark Gibney eds., 2014).

**Advisory Opinion OC-21/14, *Rights and Guarantees of Children in the Context of Migration and/or in Need of International Protection***, Inter-Am. Ct. H.R. (ser. A) No. 21 (Aug. 19, 2014), *excerpts*.

European Court of Justice, [\*Case C-608/22 & C-609/22, AH & FN v. Bundesamt für Fremdenwesen und Asyl\*](#) (Oct. 4, 2024) (asylum for Afghani women refugees)

11/10 - 23rd class: International criminal law

Handbook, pp. 1081-1095, 1112-1032

11/12 - 24th class: Transitional justice

Handbook pp 1146-1165, 1171-1186.

11/17 - 25th class: Business and human rights

Handbook pp. 940-975

**Anand Grover et al.**, *Pharmaceutical Companies and Global Lack of Access to Medicines: Strengthening Accountability Under the Right to Health*, 21 **CAMBRIDGE Q. HEALTHCARE ETHICS** 298 (2012).

11/19 - 26<sup>th</sup> class: Human rights fact-finding and review of the topics covered

Handbook pp. 733-743 (new technologies and fact finding)

## [Student Resources](#)

[Antonin Scalia Law School Academic Regulations](#)

[GMU Common Course Policies Addendum](#)

[Mason Square Services](#)

[Mason Square Police](#)

Van Metre Hall, Room 110

Emergency - Dial 911

Escort Services - 703-993-8070

Dispatch – 703-993-2810

[Student Support and Advocacy Center \(SSAC\)](#)

Mason Square Sexual Assault Services:

Van Metre Hall, Room 222D

703-993-8186

Notice of Mandatory Reporting of Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment, Interpersonal Violence, and Stalking:

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Non-Confidential Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If a student wishes to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703 -380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703 -993-2380. Students may also seek assistance or support measures from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703 -993-8730, or emailing [titleix@gmu.edu](mailto:titleix@gmu.edu).

[Mason Square Clinic](#)

Van Metre Hall, Room B102

703-991-2831

[Counseling and Psychological Services](#)

[Student Health Services](#)

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