

Human Rights & World Politics
GOV 365W (38140)/WGS 340 (45104)
Spring 2020

COURSE INFORMATION

Instructor: Rhonda L. Evans, J.D., Ph.D.
Class Meeting: T/TH 3:30-4:45 pm @ WAG 214
Email: revans@austin.utexas.edu
Office Hours: T/TH 4:45 pm – 6:15 pm; or by appointment
Office Location: BAT 4.150

Teaching Assistant:
Email:
Office Hours:
Office Location:

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Human rights feature prominently in contemporary world politics. Today there exists a large and complex international human rights regime consisting of the United Nations and several regionally-based human rights systems. Focusing on the UN, this course introduces you to the legal, political, and policy dimensions of international human rights. In so doing, it addresses: (1) the legal and institutional infrastructures and processes that exist at domestic and international levels for the promotion and protection of human rights; (2) the main actors involved in human rights advocacy, including states, international organizations, tribunals, activists, nongovernmental organizations, and national human rights institutions; (3) the interests of these actors as well as the tactics that they employ to advance their interests; and, (4) the challenges of assessing the effectiveness of human rights advocacy and how these challenges can be met by employing basic precepts of quantitative and qualitative political science research.

By the semester's end, students should be able to answer the following questions: What is international human rights law? How does international human rights law figure into human rights advocacy? How effective is international human rights law, and under what conditions does it work? And finally, how do we know whether or not it works? Considering the significant resources and efforts that are devoted to international human rights institutions and advocacy each year, these are clearly very important questions.

And yet, you may be surprised to learn that much remains to be learned about the efficacy of international human rights law. In exploring why this is so, we will consider the various challenges to studying international human rights law from an empirical (as opposed to a strictly normative) perspective. You should emerge from this course with an enhanced understanding of the mechanics of human rights advocacy and an improved ability to evaluate its effectiveness. This course is designed to increase your knowledge about human rights, but more importantly, it is designed to help you develop your general analytical skills. The latter are fungible skills in which prospective employers are often most interested.

DIVISION OF LABOR

Dr. Rhonda Evans, the class Instructor, is responsible for designing the course, delivering lectures, drafting exams, and creating assignments. Dr. Evans, a former lawyer, is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Government and Director of the Edward A. Clark Center for Australian and New Zealand Studies. Cody Kuhn, the class Teaching Assistant (TA), is a Graduate Student in the Department of

Government. He is responsible for grading exams and assignments pursuant to guidance provided by the Instructor. Both the Instructor and TA are available to provide students with assistance in learning the material and preparing for exams. In addition, Dr. Evans is happy to discuss with students potential career paths and the ways in which graduate and/or legal degrees may help students achieve their professional goals.

FIVE-MINUTE SPEAKERS SERIES

A university education entails more than completing a prescribed curriculum. If you want to be successful on the job market or in obtaining admission to a postgraduate program (including law school), then you need to avail yourself of the opportunities that UT-Austin provides for enhancing your skillset, broadening your experience, and ultimately “building your brand.” The University offers many such opportunities, though I have discovered that many students are either unaware of them, or they fail to appreciate their value. This speakers series aims to expose you to these opportunities and encourage you to think about how your participation in them might help you achieve your goals.

Throughout the semester, the first five minutes of class will sometimes be used to discuss various programs and organizations at UT-Austin that offer undergraduates opportunities to broaden or deepen their studies; obtain internships; acquire firsthand research experience; learn more about a profession; and/or, otherwise expand their skill-sets. In some cases, representatives from these programs and organizations will be present. If you have ideas for topics or speakers for this series, please share them with the instructor ASAP. We will add the speakers to the syllabus as we get them scheduled. The instructor will sometimes provide advice on related topics, such as “how to get good letters of recommendation” or “how to write a personal statement.”

REQUIRED READING

A course packet [CP] is available for purchase at the University Coop located at 2246 Guadalupe Street. As designated in the course schedule below, additional readings can be found on Canvas [C] or online [O]. Early readings will be made available on Canvas in order to give students time to obtain the course packet.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Exams: There will be three in-class exams. They will consist mainly of short-answer, multiple-choice, and true-or-false questions. The final exam will include material from the entire semester, with the cumulative portion drawn from a study guide that will be provided to students in advance. In addition to short-answer, multiple-choice, and true-or-false questions, it may also include an essay component. Failure to take any of the exams without a University-approved excuse will automatically result in a failing grade. Adjustments may be made to the reading schedule throughout the semester, but exam dates will NOT be subject to change.

<i>Course Requirement</i>	<i>Percentage of Final Grade</i>	<i>Date</i>
Exam One	20%	Thursday, March 5
Writing Assignment One	10%	Monday, April 20 @ noon
Exam Two	20%	Tuesday, April 14
Writing Assignment Two	15%	Friday, May 8 @ 8:00 pm
Exam Three	35%	Friday, May 15

Writing Assignment One: You will be given an article that analyzes the effectiveness of international human rights law and asked to write an abstract of the article. Details to be provided on Canvas.

Writing Assignment Two: You will be given materials that form a “case study” and from these (and only these materials) you will write a qualitative analysis that examines the case study from a theoretical perspective covered in the course.

Class Participation: Attendance and participation do not constitute a formal component of the course grade. Therefore, we do not need to know when and why you won't be or weren't in class. Consider, however, that in my decade-plus experience as an instructor I have found that final course grades generally correlate to consistent student engagement with the course. Attendance and participation after having read the assignment are the critical components of *meaningful engagement*—turning up and sleeping through class (yes, I can see you) or failing to read the assigned the materials does not constitute meaningful engagement. So, I urge you to read, attend class, and participate in classroom discussions throughout the semester.

Grading Scale: Final grades will be determined on the basis of the following rubric. Please note: to ensure fairness, all numbers are absolute and will not be rounded up or down at any stage. Thus, a B- will be inclusive of all scores of 80.000 through 83.999. The University does not recognize the grade of A+.

- A = 94-100
- A- = 90-93
- B+ = 87-89
- B = 84-86
- B- = 80-83
- C+ = 77-79
- C = 74-76
- C- = 70-73
- D+ = 67-69
- D = 64-66
- D- = 60-63
- F = 0-60

Extra Credit: Don't ask; there will be none.

But, what if I feel like I'm struggling? The TA and I are here to help you. **DO:** Visit our office hours as soon as you think that you may be having difficulty. Show us your lecture notes. Bring us your questions. Discuss the material with us. Visit us well before the exam with questions. Show us rough drafts of your assignments well in advance of their due dates. Promptly review with us exams and/or assignments on which you performed poorly. **DO NOT:** Wait until it's too late for you to improve your grade by improving your performance on exams and assignments or demand the grade that you need/want to receive for the course and expect that it will simply be given to you. In the end, you will receive the grade that *you earn*. If you need credit for this course in order to graduate, or if for whatever reason you need a particular grade in order to maintain or achieve a certain GPA, it is your responsibility to do what it takes to earn that grade. It is not incumbent upon us to give it to you.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This is a guide for the course readings. Please do the assigned reading before the class day for which they are listed. Adjustments may be made to this schedule throughout the semester, but exam dates will not be subject to change. Pay close attention to the page numbers specified in the assignments as sometimes assignments are less than the entire article/book chapter listed. Assignments marked by [O] can be found

online; those marked [C] can be found on Canvas; and, those marked by [CP] can be found in the course packet. Lectures will include material that is not available in the assigned readings.

Jan. 21 Introduction to the Course

[C] Read the syllabus.

Jan. 23 What are the origins of human rights?

[C & CP] Michael Freeman, "Universalism of human rights and cultural relativism," in Scott Sheeran and Sir Nigel Rodley (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of International Human Rights Law* (New York: Routledge), pp. 49-57.

[C & CP] Jack Donnelly, "The Concept of Human Rights," *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), pp. 75-92.

Jan. 28 How do human rights work?

[C & CP] Michael Goodhart, "Human Rights and the Politics of Contestation," in Mark Goodale (ed.), *Human Rights at the Crossroads* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 31-44.

[C & CP] Jack Donnelly, "The Concept of Human Rights," *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), pp. 7-13.

Jan. 30 Why international human rights law?

[CP] Beth A. Simmons, "Why International Law? The Development of the International Human Rights Regime in the 20th Century," from *Mobilizing for Human Rights: International Law in Domestic Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 23-56.

Feb. 4-6 Where do human rights treaties come from? The Convention Against Torture

[CP] Bertrand G. Ramcharan, "The Law-Making Process: From Declaration to Treaty to Custom to Prevention," in Dinah Shelton (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of International Human Rights Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 499-506.

[CP] Ann Marie Clark, "Amnesty International in International Politics" and "Torture," in *Diplomacy of Conscience: Amnesty International and Changing Human Rights Norms* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 3-20; 37-69.

Feb. 11-13 What is hard international human rights law?

[CP] Rhona K.M. Smith, "Human Rights in International Law" in Goodhart (ed.), *Human Rights: Politics and Practice*, 2nd ed., pp. 26-44.

[CP] Nisuke Ando, "National Implementation and Interpretation," in Dinah Shelton (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of International Human Rights Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 698-718.

[C] UN, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)* (1976).

[C] UN, *First Optional Protocol to the ICCPR* (1976).

Feb. 18-20 What is soft international human rights law?

[CP] Rhona K.M. Smith, "Human Rights in International Law" in Goodhart (ed.), *Human Rights: Politics and Practice*, 2nd ed., pp. 26-44.

- [CP] Nigel S. Rodley, “The Role and Impact of Treaty Bodies,” in Shelton (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of International Human Rights Law*, pp. 621-48.
- [C] Model Complaint Form for Communications to the UN Human Rights Committee.
- [C] UN, *First Optional Protocol to the ICCPR* (1976).
- [C] UN Human Rights Committee, *Concluding Observations on the Human Rights Committee: Australia* (7 May 2009).
- [C] Peggy Brett and Patrick Mutzenberg, *UN Human Rights Committee: Participation in the Reporting Process: Guidelines for NGOs* (Center for Civil and Politics Rights, 2010).

Feb. 25 Interpreting International Human Rights Treaties

- [CP] Cecilia Medina, “The Role of International Tribunals: Law-Making or Creative Interpretation?” in Dinah Shelton (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of International Human Rights Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 649-61.

Feb. 27 International Human Rights Treaty Interpretation In-Class Exercise

- [C] TBD
- [C] Model Complaint Form for Communications to the UN Human Rights Committee.
- [C] UN, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) (1976).
- [C] UN, *First Optional Protocol to the ICCPR* (1976).

Mar. 3 International Human Rights Treaty Interpretation and Exam Review

- [C] Human Rights Committee Views, TBD

Mar. 5 EXAM ONE

Mar. 10 Why do States Ratify Human Rights Treaties?

- [CP] Beth A. Simmons, “Theories of Commitment,” in *Mobilizing for Human Rights: International Law in Domestic Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 57-80.

Mar. 12 Basics of Social Science Research: Empirical Approaches

- [CP] Janet Buttolph Johnson and H.T. Reynolds, “The Empirical Approach to Political Science,” *Political Science Research Methods*, 7th ed. (Sage/CQ Press, 2012), pp. 33-48.
- [CP] Johnson and Reynolds, “The Building Blocks of Social Scientific Research: Hypotheses, Concepts, and Variables,” *Political Science Research Methods*, 7th ed., pp. 102-116; 119-126.
- [CP] Janet Buttolph Johnson and H.T. Reynolds, “The Importance of Theory,” *Political Science Research Methods*, 7th ed. (Sage/CQ Press, 2012), pp. 43-46.

Mar. 16-20 SPRING BREAK—REJOICE!

Mar. 24-26 Measuring Human Rights

- [CP] Todd Landman, “Measuring Human Rights: Principles, Practice and Policy,” 26 *Human Rights Quarterly* (2004): 906-31.
- [CP] Johnson and Reynolds, “The Building Blocks of Social Scientific Research: Measurement,” *Political Science Research Methods*, 7th ed., pp. 127-134; 136; 144-153.

- Mar. 31 Why do States Comply with Human Rights Treaties? A Theoretical Approach**
- [CP] Beth A. Simmons, “Theories of Compliance,” in *Mobilizing for Human Rights: International Law in Domestic Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 112-55.
- Apr. 2 Why do States Comply with Human Rights Treaties? A Quantitative Analysis**
- [CP] Beth A. Simmons, “Equality for Women: Education, Work, and Reproductive Rights,” in *Mobilizing for Human Rights: International Law in Domestic Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 202-36.
- Apr. 7 Why do States Comply with Human Rights Treaties? A Qualitative Analysis**
- [CP] Beth A. Simmons, “Equality for Women: Education, Work, and Reproductive Rights,” in *Mobilizing for Human Rights: International Law in Domestic Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 236-55.
- Apr. 9 A Critical Perspective on Quantitative Measures**
- [CP] Sally Engle Merry, “A World of Quantification,” and “Measuring Violence against Women,” from *The Seductions of Quantification: Measuring Human Rights, Gender Violence, and Sex Trafficking* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), pp. 1-22; 27-43.
- Apr. 14 Overflow, Discussion of Writing Assignment One, and Exam Review**
- Apr. 16 EXAM TWO**
- Apr. 20 Writing Assignment One Due at Noon**
- You must submit via Canvas.
- Apr. 21 Basics of Social Science Research: Qualitative Approaches**
- [CP] Dawn Snape and Liz Spencer, “The Foundations of Qualitative Research,” in Jane Ritchie and Jane Lewis (eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc., 2003), pp. 1-23.
- Apr. 23-28 Transnational Advocacy Networks**
- [CP] Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), pp. 1-29.
- [CP] Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), pp. 165-98.
- Apr. 30 An Anthropological Approach: Theory and Methods**

[CP] Sally Engle Merry, "Introduction: Culture and Transnationalism," in "Gender Violence and the CEDAW Process," in *Human Rights & Gender Violence: Translating International Law into Local Justice* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), pp. 1-35.

May 5 An Anthropological Approach: Analysis

[CP] Sally Engle Merry, "Gender Violence and the CEDAW Process," in *Human Rights & Gender Violence: Translating International Law into Local Justice* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), pp. 73-102.

May 7 A Critical Perspective

[CP] Makau Matua, *Human Rights: A Political and Cultural Critique* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), pp. ix-xi; 1-38.

May 8 Writing Assignment One Due at 8:00 pm

EXAM THREE

Friday, May 15

9:00 am-12:00 noon

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES & REQUIRED UNIVERSITY NOTICES & POLICIES

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: I strive to create a supportive learning environment for all students and to ensure that all students enjoy equal access and opportunity in the course of their educational experiences at UT-Austin. Some students require accommodations in order to achieve these objectives. Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 471-6259 (voice) or 512-410-6644 (Video Phone) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations. If you require accommodations, let's talk at the beginning of the semester so that we can discuss the types of accommodations that you need. I prefer to meet with you during office hours or by appointment so that we can consider together ways in which I can facilitate your learning experience in my class. Of course, you are not required to disclose to me any information about your disability. Your disability information will be kept confidential. No later than five business days before an exam, please remind me of any testing accommodations you will require. In some instances, a student has not gone through the formal process of documenting their disability with the University. If you find yourself in this situation, let's talk. For more information, visit this [website](#).

Electronic Device (Including Cell Phones) Policy: All electronic devices, including laptop computers and cell phones, are strictly forbidden absent an SSD accommodations letter OR an individualized determination by the instructor. If you are seen handling your cell phone during class, five points will be deducted from the next exam grade. However, if during class you need to have access to your phone on account of extraordinary life circumstances, please advise the instructor of that fact in advance of class (no explanation of the circumstances required) and sit in the front row. This exemption does not apply to exams. Touching your phone during an exam will result in a failing grade.

Students are not permitted to record class lectures without first securing written permission from the instructor. Students who do so without permission will have their final course grades dropped by one full letter, and they may face legal action in a court of law.

Grade Complaint Policy: The TA will grade the exams according to a key generated by the instructor and will consult with the instructor during the grading process. Complaints about the way in which an exam has been graded must first be lodged in writing (e.g. by email) with the TA within seven days of exams being returned to students for their review. The TA will consider a complaint's merits and may exercise his/her discretion to alter the grade. Students who are dissatisfied with the course of action proposed by the TA may submit their exams for re-grading in their entirety by the instructor, who may assign a higher or lower overall exam grade than that originally assigned by the TA. Students who remain dissatisfied with their final course grade may elect to pursue action at the College-level. More on that [here](#).

Academic Integrity: The University of Texas maintains an Honor Code. Its core values are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community. Because academic integrity is a fundamental value of higher education at UT, I will not tolerate acts of cheating, plagiarism, falsification or attempts to cheat, plagiarize, or falsify. Should I determine that an academic integrity violation has taken place, I will follow the University's formal process for dealing with such matters. I am a former Assistant Prosecuting Attorney. You do not want to give me a reason to slip back into prosecutorial mode—sometimes I miss my old job.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes plagiarism. If you have questions about the concepts of academic integrity and plagiarism, please consult the resources that are available [here](#). On Canvas you will also find *A Brief Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism*, which is also available [online](#). If you're still confused, talk to the TA or instructor. Note that student interest in discussing these concepts will not be construed as evidence of a desire or intention to plagiarize.

Email Policy: Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, you are responsible for reading your email for university and course-related information and announcements. It is your responsibility to keep the University informed about changes to your e-mail address. You should check your e-mail regularly and frequently—I recommend daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-critical. You can find UT Austin's policies and instructions for updating your e-mail address [here](#). All email correspondence concerning this class will occur through Canvas, which means that my emails to you will be automatically sent to your official UT email address.

I have endeavored to make this syllabus as thorough and clear as possible. Before emailing with questions about the course, review the syllabus. It will likely contain the answer that you seek. Substantive questions about the course material will only be answered in class (where they are especially welcomed) or during office hours.

Make-Up Exams: This policy may not apply to students with disabilities. Make-up exams will be considered only under exceptional circumstances and will require written documentation of the excuse proffered. All make-up exams will be scheduled for a single date and time; at the professor's discretion, they will not follow the same format as the exam administered to the class. There will be no departure from the printed schedule of final examinations. For the final exam, changes for individual emergencies of a serious nature will be made only with the approval of the instructor, the chair of the department or dean of the school involved, and the dean of undergraduate studies. The department chair or school dean will, if a serious emergency is believed to exist, forward a written request to the assistant vice chancellor

for academic advising setting forth the nature of the emergency. A student who is absent from an examination without excuse will be given a grade of zero. An incomplete (I) will be given in the case of a student absent from the final examination who has presented a satisfactory excuse to the instructor or an official university excuse.

Classroom Behavior: It's important that we have a classroom atmosphere that optimizes teaching and learning, and we all share the responsibility for creating a civil and non-disruptive forum. Students are expected to conduct themselves at all times in a manner that does not disrupt teaching or learning. Here are some guidelines for classroom behavior: (1) be on time to class; (2) packing up your things early is disruptive to others around you and most especially to the instructor; (3) classroom discussion should be open and free-flowing, but this can be accomplished using civilized and respectful language; and (4) any discussion from class that continues on any listserv or class discussion list should meet these same expectations.

Accommodations for Religious Holidays: By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least 14 days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. Notification is only necessary if you will miss an examination. If you must be absent for this reason, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center, the Employee Assistance Program, and The University of Texas Police Department. Call 512-232-5050 or visit this [website](#).

Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC) Crisis Line: If you are experiencing a mental health crisis (depression, anxiety, e.g.) call the confidential CMHC Crisis line at 512-471-CALL (2255). Call even if you aren't sure you're in a full-blown crisis, but sincerely need help. Staff are there to help you. Alternatively, you can contact the CMHC for more services: <https://cmhc.utexas.edu/>.

Personal or Family Emergencies: If you experience a personal or family emergency (death in the family, protracted sickness, or serious mental health issues) that prevents you from attending an exam or forces you to miss multiple days of class, you should contact [Student Emergency Services in the Office of the Dean of Students](#). They will work with you to communicate with your professors and let them know of your situation.

Emergency Evacuation Policy: Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation: (1) familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building; (2) if you require assistance to evacuate, inform me in writing during the first week of class; (3) in the event of an evacuation, follow my instructions or those of class instructors; and, (4) do not re-enter a building unless you're given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.