

**Human Rights & World Politics**  
GOV 365N (38390)/WGS 340 (45605)  
Spring 2019

**COURSE INFORMATION**

**Instructor:** Rhonda L. Evans, J.D., Ph.D.  
**Class Meeting:** T/TH 2:00-3:30 pm @ MEZ B0.306  
**Email:** [revans@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:revans@austin.utexas.edu)  
**Office Hours:** T 11:30 am – 1:00 pm; TH 12:00 – 1:30 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 primarily 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 advocacy work? How effective is it, 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. Siyun Jiang, the class Teaching Assistant (TA), is a Graduate Student in the Department of Government. She is responsible for grading exams and assignments pursuant to guidance provided by the Instructor. Both the Instructor and the 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**

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.

### **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].

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Exams:** Course grades will be based on student performance on three exams. All three exams will be administered in class. 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. It will also include an essay component. Failure to take any of the exams without a University-approved excuse will automatically result in a failing grade.

<i>Course Requirement</i>	<i>Percentage of Final Grade</i>	<i>Date</i>
Exam One	30%	Thursday, February 28
Exam Two	30%	Tuesday, April 23
Exam Three	40%	Friday, May 17

**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 exam and final course grades generally correlate to consistent student engagement with the course. Attendance and participation are important components of *meaningful engagement*—turning up and sleeping through class 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.

At the start of each class, I will solicit questions from students about the assigned reading. Questions may be provided orally or in written form. Students may also wish to email these questions to me

before class. I will endeavor to address these questions during the ensuing lecture, or where appropriate, at another class meeting.

**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'm struggling?** The TA and I are here to help you. **DO:** Visit our office hours as soon as you realize that you're having difficulty. Show us your lecture notes. Bring us your questions. Discuss the material with us. Visit us 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; offer excuses; demand the grade that you need/want to receive for the course and expect that it will simply be given to you; or, request special treatment. 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.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES & REQUIRED UNIVERSITY NOTICES & POLICIES**

**Electronic Device (Including Cell Phone) Policy:** All electronic devices, including laptop computers and cell phones, are strictly forbidden absent documentation of need by an appropriate university official. If you are seen handling your cell phone during class, five points will be deducted from the next exam grade. 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 in consultation with the instructor. 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. 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 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:

[http://www.utexas.edu/cola/student-affairs/\\_files/pdf/grade\\_appeals\\_form\\_student\\_version.pdf](http://www.utexas.edu/cola/student-affairs/_files/pdf/grade_appeals_form_student_version.pdf).

**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.

If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, visit this website:

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/learningmodules/plagiarism/>. If you're still confused, talk to the TA or the instructor.

**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 at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>. 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:** Just get yourself to the exams, and save us all the hassle. 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 may not follow the same format as the exam administered to the class. There will be no departure from the printed schedule of final examinations. 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. Just in case you were raised by wolves, 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 and Students with Disabilities:** 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. If you require special accommodations, you must obtain a letter that documents your disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement 471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Present the letter to me at the beginning of the semester so we can discuss the accommodations you need. No later than five business days before an exam, you should remind me of any testing accommodations you will need. See <http://ddce.utexas.edu/disability/>.

**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 (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

**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.

## **AND FINALLY, THE 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. 22 Introduction to the Course**

[C] Read the syllabus.

### **Jan. 24 The Politics of International Human Rights Law (readings cont'd. on next pg.)**

[O] Exchange between Eric Posner and Kenneth Roth, "Have Human Rights Treaties Failed?" *The New York Times* (28 December 2014), <https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2014/12/28/have-human-rights-treaties-failed>.

- [O] Eric Posner, “The Case against Human Rights,” *The Guardian* (14 December 2014), <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2014/dec/04/-sp-case-against-human-rights>.
- [O] Beth A. Simmons, “What’s Right with Human Rights,” 35 *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas* (Winter), <https://democracyjournal.org/magazine/35/whats-right-with-human-rights/>.

**Jan. 29-31 Why International Human Rights Law?**

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

**Feb. 5 Theoretical Foundations**

- [C & CP] Janet Buttolph Johnson and H.T. Reynolds, “The Importance of Theory,” *Political Science Research Methods*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (Sage/CQ Press, 2012), pp. 43-46.
- [C & CP] Beth Simmons, “International Law and International Relations,” in Keith E. Whittington, R. Daneie Kelemen, and Gregory A. Caldeira (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Law and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 187-208.

**Feb. 7-12 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*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 26-44.
- [C] UN, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) (1976).
- [C] UN, *First Optional Protocol to the ICCPR* (1976).
- [CP] Ann Marie Clark, *Diplomacy of Conscience: Amnesty International and Changing Human Rights Norms* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 37-69.

**Feb. 14-19 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*, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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] Peggy Brett and Patrick Mutzenberg, *UN Human Rights Committee: Participation in the Reporting Process: Guidelines for NGOs* (Center for Civil and Politics Rights, 2010).
- [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).

**Feb. 21 International Human Rights Treaties: Approaches of Interpretation & a Simulation Exercise**

- [C or O] TBD
- [C] UN, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) (1976).
- [C] UN, *First Optional Protocol to the ICCPR* (1976).

**Feb. 26    Intepreting International Human Rights Treaties, Overflow, and Exam Review**

[C]        Human Rights Committee Views, TBD

**Feb. 28    EXAM ONE**

**Mar. 5     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*, 7<sup>th</sup> 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*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 102-116; 119-126.

**Mar. 7     Measuring Human Rights**

[CP]       Johnson and Reynolds, “The Building Blocks of Social Scientific Research: Measurement,” *Political Science Research Methods*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 127-134; 136; 144-153.

[CP]       Todd Landman, “Measuring Human Rights: Principles, Practice and Policy,” *26 Human Rights Quarterly* (2004): 906-31.

**Mar. 12    Basics of Social Science Research: Interpretive Approaches**

[CP]       Janet Buttolph Johnson and H.T. Reynolds, “The Empirical Approach to Political Science,” *Political Science Research Methods*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (Sage/CQ Press, 2012), pp. 51-60.

[CP]       TBD

**Mar. 14    A Qualitative Approach**

[CP]       Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), pp. 1-22.

**Mar. 18-22                    SPRING BREAK—REJOICE!**

**Mar. 26    A Qualitative Approach**

[CP]       Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), pp. TBD.

**Mar. 28    A Quantitative Approach**

[CP]       Emilie M. Hafner-Burton and Kiyoteru Tsutsui, “Human Rights in a Globalizing World: The Paradox of Empty Promises,” 110(5) *American Journal of Sociology* (March, 2005): 1373-1411.

**Apr. 2-4    A Mixed Methods Approach**

[CP]       Beth A. Simmons, *Mobilizing for Human Rights: International Law in Domestic Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. TBD.

**Apr. 9-11 An Interpretivist Approach**

[CP] Sally Engle Merry, *Human Rights & Gender Violence: Translating International Law into Local Justice* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), pp. TBD.

**Apr. 16 How Approaches Influence Findings**

[CP] Emilie M. Hafner-Burton and James Ron, "Seeing Double: Human Rights Impact through Qualitative and Quantitative Eyes," 61(2) *World Politics* (2009), pp. 360-401.

**Apr. 18 Overflow and Exam Review**

**Apr. 23 EXAM TWO**

**Apr. 25 Revisiting the Human Rights Committee**

[C & O] TBD

**Apr. 30 Critical Perspective, 1**

[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. 1-26; 44-74.

**May 2 Critical Perspective, 2**

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

**May 7 Critical Perspective, 3**

[CP] David Kennedy, "The International Human Rights Regime: Still Part of the Problem?" In *Examining Critical Perspectives on Human Rights*, ed. Rob Dickinson, Elena Katselli, Colin Murray, Ole W. Pedersen (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 19-34.

**May 9 Course Wrap-Up, Reflections, Exam Three Review, and Course Evaluations**

**EXAM THREE**  
**Friday, May 17, 2:00 - 5:00 pm**