

Conrad Grebel University College
University of Waterloo
PACS 301 Special Topics: Human Rights in a Complex World
Winter 2019

Class Time: 1:00 pm to 2:20 pm, Tuesdays and Thursdays

Location: CGR 1300

Instructor: Andrew Thompson

Office Hours: 12:00 to 12:50, Tuesdays and Thursdays or by appointment

Office Location: CGR 1300 at Conrad Grebel; 217 at the Balsillie School of International Affairs

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Acknowledgment:

We are on the traditional territory of the Attiwandaron (Neutral), Aniashinaabe, Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes ten kilometers on each side of the Grand River.

Course Description:

This course will examine the ethical and practical challenges that civil society actors encounter when trying to advance and defend human rights in a world that has become increasingly hostile to international human rights norms and laws. Topics discussed in the course will include but not be limited to: Human Rights at the United Nations, past and present; women's human rights; LGBTQ+ rights; disability rights; refugee rights; the rights of Indigenous peoples; and "new human rights," such as rights in an age of Artificial Intelligence. For the major assignment, students will be asked to design a human rights campaign on any human rights issue of their choice.

Course Objectives:

Through this course, students will acquire the following knowledge and skills:

Knowledge

- A deep understanding of the full spectrum of human rights.
- A strong comprehension of the ethical and practical challenges associated with advancing, respecting and protecting human rights.
- New insights into the various ways in which civil society actors contribute to the global governance of human rights.

Skills

- The ability to apply principles of human rights to contemporary national and international problems.

- The ability to give a persuasive oral presentation.
- The ability to design a human rights campaign.

Course teaching methodology:

PACS 301 is a seminar course that emphasizes critical analysis, discussion, and active class participation. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings. Readings will consist of a mix of scholarly articles, reports by human rights organizations, and treaties in international human rights law. At the end of the term, students will also be expected to present their major projects in class.

Web Page:

This course will make use of a WATERLOO LEARN website. This site will provide general information for the course, and other matters that may be posted from time-to-time. Important announcements such as the cancellation of class due to illness will also be posted there, so please try to check the site before each class, just in case.

Course Evaluation and Assignments:

Class Participation (20%) (Due date: Ongoing)

Students will be evaluated on their contributions to class discussions. Students will be assessed on the quality, not quantity, of their contributions. Discussions will be based on material presented by the instructor as well as the readings. Students are expected to read approximately between 60 and 80 pages per week. All readings can be accessed online. ***Human Rights Quarterly* and *Journal of Human Rights* articles can be access via the UW library.**

First Assignment (10%) (Due date: February 14)

Students must create a proposal for a fictitious human rights non-governmental organization. The proposal must include the following items:

- The name and mandate/mission of the NGO;
- A rationale explaining why the organization is necessary (i.e. what is the gap that the organization will fill);
- A survey of comparable organizations that already exist;
- A discussion of the unique contribution of the organization (i.e. how will it differ from existing organizations
- Citations and a bibliography

The proposal should be no more than 1000 words, not including notes and bibliography.

Second Assignment (30%) (Due date: March 22)

Scenario: Troubled by the state of the world, a wealthy philanthropist dedicates \$100 million of her fortune to the advancement of international human rights and social justice by establishing a charitable foundation. The foundation's mandate is to fund innovative campaigns related to any human rights and social justice issue.

Assignment: Students must create a fictitious human rights non-governmental organization, and then write and submit a grant proposal to the philanthropist's foundation (students may use their NGO from assignment 1, but are not required to do so). Their aim is to secure funding for an original and innovative campaign on the issue of their choosing. The focus of the campaign may be thematic (i.e. children's rights), or country-specific, regional, or global.

The grant proposal must be between 4000 and 5000 words, not including notes and bibliography, and must include the following items:

- The name and mandate/mission of the NGO;
- A clear articulation of the issue/problem that the campaign is trying to address;
- A campaign message, slogan or motto, including a brief rationale for the particular message, slogan or motto;
- A discussion of the visual imagery that will be used in the campaign, including a rationale for the imagery;
- A discussion of some of the ethical and practical dilemmas associated with campaigning on the particular issue being advanced;
- A critical assessment of the limitations or pitfalls of past civil society campaigns that have attempted to advance similar aims;
- A discussion of the beneficiaries (i.e. political prisoners, children, etc.) and targets (i.e., the state, transnational corporations, etc.) of the campaign;
- A discussion of the intended audience (i.e. youth, seniors, etc.), and what it is that the campaign will ask them to do (i.e. sign petitions, write letters, engage in peaceful protest, etc.)
- A discussion of the various types of technology that will be used in the campaign, including why and how it will be used;
- A discussion of the expected objectives (i.e. end child hunger) and outcomes (i.e. creation of a school breakfast program) of the campaign;
- A discussion of the expected duration of the campaign (i.e. one year, two years, ten years, etc.), including a rationale for this decision;
- A preliminary budget that lists the amount of money being requested and how it will be spent;
- A discussion of the potential impact of the campaign (i.e. creation of new international law, the elimination of nuclear weapons, affordable housing, etc.);
- Citations and a bibliography

Class Presentation (10%) (Due date: March 26, 28, April 2 and 4):

Using either PowerPoint or Prezi, each student will be asked to present their campaigns to the class. Presentations will be between 10 and 15 minutes, followed by another 5 to 10 minutes for questions.

Final Exam (30%)

Students will write a final exam at the end of the term. Students will be asked to write short essays on the material covered in the course.

UWaterloo Policies

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

Arts: [Academic Integrity website](#) University of Waterloo: [Academic Integrity Office](#)

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline.

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - [Student Petitions and Grievances](#), Section 4.

Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals.

Other sources of information for students:

Note for students with learning differences: The [AccessAbility Services \(AAS\)](#) office, located in Needles Hall Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the ASS office at the beginning of each academic term.

Counselling Services: Counselling Services provides free confidential counselling, in both individual and group sessions, with qualified professionals to help registered students, faculty and staff with personal concerns, educational career decisions, and strategies to studies and exams: www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infocs, ext. 33528, NH Room 2080.

Accommodation for Illness: A medical certificate presented in support of an official petition for relief from normal academic requirements must provide all of the information requested on the “University of Waterloo Verification of Illness” form or it will not be accepted. More information can be obtained from Health Services and the form is available in pdf: <https://uwaterloo.ca/health-services/student-medical-clinic/services/verification-illness>

The Writing Centre: Writing Centre staff offer one-on-one support in planning assignments and presentations, using and documenting research, organizing and structuring papers, and revising for clarity and coherence. Make an appointment or drop in at the Library for quick questions or feedback. To book a 50-minute appointment and to see drop-in hours, visit www.uwaterloo.ca/writing-centre

Weekly schedule

The following course schedule may change from time-to-time to reflect the actual pace of class discussion and movement through course topics. Any changes to this course schedule will be

announced in class at least a week in advance, and an announcement circulated on LEARN about changes. It is also possible some readings may change, and if so, changes will also be announced in class and noted on LEARN.

*Week 1, January 8 and 10: Introduction: What are Human Rights, and Practical and Ethical Dilemmas associated with advancing, respecting and protecting

Readings:

- [The Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), 1948
- Daniel Bell and Jean-Marc Coicaud, "[The Ethical Challenges of International Human Rights NGOs](#)," United Nations University Policy Brief, 2006.
- CIVICUS, "[2018 State of Civil Society Report](#)," 2018

Week 2, January 15 and 17: Standards and Enforcement – The United Nations Human Rights System

Readings:

- Paul Lauren Gordon, "[To Preserve and Build on Its Achievements and to Redress its Shortcomings: The Journey from the Commission on Human Rights to the Human Rights Council](#)," *Human Rights Quarterly* 29 (2007): 307-45.
- Laura K. Landolt and Byungwon Woo, "[NGOs Invite Attention: From the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to the Human Rights Council](#)," *Journal of Human Rights* 16, no. 4 (2017): 407-427.
- Ted Piccone, "[Assessing the United Nations Human Rights Council](#)," Brookings Institution, 2017.
- Gardiner Harris, "[Trump Administration Withdraws U.S. From U.N. Human Rights Council](#)," *New York Times*, 2018.

Week 3, January 22 and 24: Advancing Political and Civil Rights vs. Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Readings:

- [Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#), 2008.
- Daniel J. Whelan and Jack Donnelly, "[The West, Economic and Social Rights, and the Global Human Rights Regime: Setting the Record Straight](#)," *Human Rights Quarterly* 29 (2007): 908-49.
- Kenneth Roth, "[Defending Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Practical Issues Faced by an International Human Rights Organization](#)," *Human Rights Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (2004): 63-73.
- Mahmood Monshipouri, Claude E. Welch Jr. and Sergio Brian Cruz Egoávil, "[China's Rising Power: Economic Growth vs. Freedom Deficit](#)," *Journal of Human Rights* 10, no. 3 (2011): 290-310.

Week 4, January 29 and 31: Human Rights, Development and Decolonization

Readings:

- "[Sustainable Development Goals](#)," 2015.
- Bonny Ibhawoh, "[The Right to Development: The Politics and Polemics of Power and Resistance](#)," *Human Rights Quarterly* 33 (2011): 76-104.

- Jan Eckel, "[Human Rights and Decolonization: New Perspectives and Open Questions](#)," *Humanity Journal* (2010): 111-135
- Sabina Alkire and Selim Jahan, "[The New Global MPI 2018: Aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals](#)," UNDP Human Development Report, 2018.

Week 5, February 5 and 7: Equality Rights

Readings:

- Robyn Linde, "[Gatekeeper Persuasion and Issue Adoption: Amnesty International and the Transnational LGBTQ Network](#)," *Journal of Human Rights* 17, no. 2 (2017): 245-264.
- Rhoda E. Howard-Hassmann, "[Universal Women's Rights Since 1970: The Centrality of Autonomy and Agency](#)," *Journal of Human Rights* 10, no. 4 (2011): 433-449.
- Julian Walker, "[The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: An Overview](#)," 2013.
- Jennifer Dabbs Sciubba, "[Securing Rights in the Twenty-First Century: A Comparison of the Disability and Older Persons' Rights Conventions](#)," *Journal of Human Rights* 15, no 4. (2016): 533-549.

*Week 6, February 12 and 14: The Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Readings:

- [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), 2007
- "[The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#)," 2015
- Centre for International Governance Innovation, "[UNDRIP Implementation: More Reflections on the Braiding of International, Domestic and Indigenous Laws: Special Report](#)," 2018. Read "Introduction" and any two chapters.
- Lindsey Kingston, "[The Destruction of Identity: Cultural Genocide and Indigenous Peoples](#)," *Journal of Human Rights* 14, no. 1 (2015): 63-83.

Week 7, Reading Week – No Classes

*Week 8, February 26 and 28: People on the Move – Refugee Responsibility Sharing

Readings:

- "[Refugees Welcome](#)" (familiarize yourself with the website)
- "[Global Compact on Refugees](#)," 2018
- Peter Schuck, "[Refugee Burden-Sharing: A Modest Proposal](#)," *Yale Journal of International Law* 22, no. 2 (1997): 244-297.
- Amnesty International, "[The Global Refugee Crisis: Genuine Responsibility Sharing – Amnesty International's Five Proposals](#)," 2016.

Week 9, March 5 and 7: Business and Human Rights

Readings:

- [“Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations “Protect, Respect, Remedy” Framework,”](#) 2011.
- Susan Ariel Aaronson and Ian Higham, [“‘Re-Righting Business:’ John Ruggie and the Struggle to Develop International Human Rights Standards for Transnational Firms,”](#) *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol. 35, no.2 (2013): 333-64.
- Florian Wettstein, [“Normativity, Ethics, and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: A Critical Assessment,”](#) *Journal of Human Rights* 14, no. 2 (2015): 162-182.

Week 10, March 12 to 14: Accountability for Mass Atrocities

Readings:

- [“Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act \(Sergei Magnitsky Law\),”](#) 2017.
- John Torpey, [“Making Whole What has been Smashed: Reflections on Reparations,”](#) *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 73, 2001: 333-58.
- William A. Schabas, [“The ‘Odious Scourge’: Evolving Interpretations of the Crime of Genocide,”](#) *Genocide Studies and Prevention*, vol. 1, n. 2, fall 2006: 93-106.
- Kevin Aquilina and Klejda Mulaj, [“Limitations in Attributing State Responsibility Under the Genocide Convention,”](#) *Journal of Human Rights* 17, no. 1 (2018): 123-139.
- [The Enough Project](#), 2018 (familiarize yourself with the website)

Week 11, March 19 and 21: “New” Human Rights Challenges – Climate Change, Digital Activism, and Artificial Intelligence

Readings:

- Jenifer Whitten-Woodring, [“News About Her: The Effects of Media Freedom and Internet Access on Women’s Rights,”](#) *Journal of Human Rights* 15, no. 3 (2016): 383-407.
- IEEE, [“Ethically Aligned Design: A Vision for Prioritizing Human Well-Being with Autonomous and Intelligent Systems,”](#) 2018. Read the “Executive Summary” and any three of the chapters in the “Committees Featured in EADv1.”
- Amnesty International, [“Strike Tracker,”](#) 2018.
- OHCHR, [“Human Rights and Climate Change,”](#) 2018 (familiarize yourself with the website)
- [Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice](#), 2018 (familiarize yourself with the website)

Week 12, March 26 to 28: In-class Presentations

Week 13, April 2 to 4: in-class Presentations