



SYLLABUS

Human Rights in Latin America
Instructor: Will Johnson, MA, JD
Language of Instruction: English
UO Credits: 4
Contact Hours: 40

Rosario, Argentina

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a survey course covering the history, theory, and practice of human rights in Latin America. Emphasis will be placed on the normative context within which human rights discourses develop, followed by an explanation of how and why legal institutions support (or inhibit) the protection of human rights in local contexts throughout the region. Drawing on the instructor's legal background, students will also be introduced to the practice of human rights law in relevant domestic and international contexts, with a special emphasis on the Inter-American Human Rights System (e.g. the Inter-American Court and the IACHR).

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Instructional Goals. The course will:

- Establish a foundation for understanding the normative structure of the international human rights system, both in history and contemporarily.
- Provide a culturally-specific context through which to study the application of international human rights laws at the domestic and regional level.
- Prepare students to pursue advanced study of human rights and related fields at the graduate level.

Student Outcomes. Students who successfully complete this course will:

- Draw connections between the relevant historical and theoretical perspectives that inform the international human rights movement.
- Analyze the moral, political, economic, and cultural tensions inherent in international human rights practices in Latin America.
- Evaluate, compare and contrast the various political, legal and development organizations that work to promote and protect human rights in Latin America.
- Begin assessing the relative success or failure of specific human rights mechanisms, e.g. the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the IACHR.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY

This course is divided between classroom instruction (2/3) and excursions or experiential learning (1/3). During class, regular lectures will be supplemented with small group discussion, videos, and guest speakers. At least half of each class period will consist of lectures covering core course material, though the structure will be informal enough to allow for group and class discussions at any point. The remaining in-class time will be divided between guided class discussions, small-group discussions, simulated debates and videos. Excursions (e.g. to museums, courthouses, NGOs, and victim’s advocacy groups) will provide an opportunity for students to begin understanding the practical application of theoretical, philosophical, and legal material covered in class. Excursions will also provide students an opportunity to engage directly with local perspectives on the topics studied in class.

METHOD OF EVALUATION (GRADING)

Attendance and participation, including in-class assignments:	40%
Midterm Exam:	20%
Final Essay or Group Project:	30%*
Excursion Reflection:	10%

*Due two weeks after end of program. Electronic submission required.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1: History and Theory of Human Rights

Students will be introduced to the historical and theoretical foundations of the modern human rights system. This will provide the foundation for all future coursework.

Day 1: Introduction to Course; Introduction to Human Rights: How do rights “function”?

Day 2: Early Ethical Foundations: Are Human Rights “Modern”?

Day 3: WWII and the creation of the United Nations; Modern Conceptions of Rights (Is Human Rights Law Actually ‘law’?)

Readings:

- **Donnelly, *Universal Human Rights*, Chapters 1-2**
- **Maritain, “The Grounds for an International Declaration of Human Rights” (1948)**

Week 2: The fight for Human Rights in Latin America

Students will be introduced to the historical events and philosophical debates that shape human rights in Latin America.

Day 1: Conquest, Colonialism, and Independence: The Human Rights Story

Day 2: 20th Century Human Rights Movements in Latin America

Days 3-4: The Cold War: Military Dictatorships, Terrorism, and Armed Resistance

Readings:

- **Wright, *State Terrorism in Latin America*, 3-46.**

Week 3: The “Who” of Human Rights

Students will explore key individuals and organizations that led the populate the human rights movement(s) in Latin America

Day 1: State Sanctioned Violence and Terror: The Latin American Experience

Day 2: Case Studies of Resistance Movements & Armed Revolutionary Groups
Day 3-4: Victims, Bystanders, and Perpetrators – Where (and how) do we draw the line?

Readings:

- **Cardenas, *Human Rights in Latin America: A Politics of Terror and Hope* (2011), Chapters 1-2 (“Introduction”, “A Regional Survey”)**
- **Handouts**

Week 4: The Inter-American System

Students will be introduced to regional human rights law as practiced through the Inter-American Human Rights System

Day 1: Legal and Philosophical Foundations: The Purpose of Regional Regimes

Day 2: The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR)

Day 3: The IACHR, continued

Day 4: The Domestic Application of Regional and International Human Rights Law

Readings:

- **Donnelly, *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice*, “Regional Human Rights Regimes,” (pp 172-179)**
- **Gloria Orrego Hoyos (2015), “Tools for Academic Research on Human Rights in Latin America: the Inter-American Human Rights System, in *Legal Information Management*, 15, pp 108-115**

Week 5: The Inter-American System, key cases

Day 1: The Inter-American Court of Human Rights (Inter-American Court)

Days 2-4: Key IACHR Cases

Readings:

- Handouts on key IACHR cases (TBD)

Week 6: The Future of Human Rights in Latin America

Students will evaluate the current situation of human rights in Latin America in an effort to understand the possibilities and challenges facing human rights in the 21st century.

Day 1-2: The State of Human Rights in 2016: Key Debates, Challenges, and Victories for Latin America

Day 3: Marginalized Groups: Indigenous Rights; Women’s Rights; Children’s Rights

Day 4: Conclusions – student presentations

Readings:

- **Wilson, “Violence Against Women in Latin America,” *LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES*, Issue 194, Vol. 41 No. 1, January 2014 3-18.**
- **Ungar & Hite, “The Arc of Human Rights,” in Ungar & Hite (eds.), *Sustaining Human Rights in the 21st Century: Strategies from Latin America*, pp 9-34.**

COURSE READINGS

Each week students may be provided with additional required news articles (online or as handouts) or related current-event pieces to supplement the required readings, below.

Required Materials:

- A Packet of Supplemental Readings will be made available to students during orientation. Additional readings include academic journal articles, Inter-American Court rulings, IACHR Reports & Recommendations, and excerpts from the following books:
 - Cardenas, Sonia. *Human Rights in Latin America: A Politics of Terror and Hope*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.
 - Donnelly, Jack. *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice* (third edition). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013.
 - Hite, Katherine and Mark Ungar. *Sustaining Human Rights in the Twenty-First Century: Strategies for Latin America*. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Press, 2013.
 - Sikink, Katherine. *The Justice Cascade: How Human Rights Prosecutions Are Changing World Politics*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011.

