



SELF PROGRAM

2026/2027

Human Rights

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Course information

Number of credits: 6 credits

Contact hours: 30 hours

Hours taught per week: 3 hours

Teaching period: Fall Semester 2026

Course description

This course examines the legal system for the protection of human rights in national legislation and in European and international legal systems. Attention will also be paid to the beneficiaries of these rights, the latest developments affecting their definition and how they are applied in practice.

Its deliberately dynamic approach will enable participants to better understand recent issues in these fields, such as:

- claims for legal rights of animals and natural habitats (including the first experiments in South America),
- the right to abortion in the USA and Europe,
- the scope and limits of the right of peoples to self-determination,

- the differences between French, Canadian, and American law on freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression.

Course outline

- Class 1: A brief history and classification of human rights
- Class 2: Are rights only for “humans”? Part 1 – Nature and animals
- Class 3: Are rights only for “humans”? Part 2 – The Peoples
- Class 4: The rights to life : outline, national and international protection.
- Class 5: Thought, belief, opinion and expression: outline, national and international protection.
- Class 6: Equality and non-discrimination in national laws
- Class 7: Dignity. Part 1 – Crimes and offenses against human dignity
- Class 8 : Dignity. Part 2 – Human rights and wars

Prerequisites

No previous study of the topic is required. The course may well be of particular interest to those with a background in law, politics or even history, but the only prerequisite is an interest in the philosophy, workings and ongoing development of human rights in national and international laws.

Course objectives

This course aims at providing students with:

- an overview of how fundamental rights are protected
- an understanding of the main issues relating to fundamental rights in different countries.

Assessment

- 50% –in-class assessment of knowledge comprehension
- 50% – final in-class written examination (i.e. class 10)

Attendance

In order to participate, students must be present. Nevertheless, a maximum of 2 (two) unexcused absences will be allowed; otherwise, no mark will be given. An unexcused absence at a test (final test or continuous assessment) means no credits for the course.

Bibliography

Thomas Buergenthal, Dinah Shelton, and al., *International Human Rights in a Nutshell*, West Academic Publishing, 2017

Pablo Gilabert, *Human Dignity and Human Rights*, Oxford University Press, 15 nov. 2018.

Christopher D. Stone, *Should Trees Have Standing?: Law, Morality, and the Environment*, Oxford University Press, 2010.

Further reading will be provided relating to each of the weekly themes as the course progresses.