Overview

This course studies the causes of human rights violations around the world and the internal and external forces that combat them. The syllabus is divided into these subtopics:

- **How and why**: Why do human rights violations occur in the first place? How do we measure and assess the severity of violations? How have these measures changed over time?
- **Internal forces**: How does internal politics and protests affect human rights violations? How do domestic political institutions (e.g., democracy) and domestic legal institutions (e.g., domestic courts) affect the severity of human rights violations?
- **External forces**: How do external forces affect human rights violations? How do other states influence human rights with coercion (e.g., sanctions)? How do non-state actors, like non-governmental organizations and activists, affect violations?
- **International institutions**: How do international institutions affect human rights violations? Under what conditions do treaties decrease rights violations? What are the effects of ad hoc bodies, like post-war tribunals? What are the effects of standing bodies, like the International Criminal Court?

Class Objectives

**Knowledge**: We will learn about key arguments, the theories behind them, and the empirical evidence that supports or disconfirms those theories.

As a disclaimer, this is not an international law course. We will become familiar with the key legal components of some human rights treaties, but our focus will be on social science and cause-and-effect questions, not legal concepts or normative questions.

**Critique**: We will assess each argument’s strengths and weaknesses. The readings on the syllabus are there because they are prominent arguments that deserve strong consideration, not because they are The Truth. We will critically evaluate their arguments and the choices authors made as they executed their research agendas.

**Construction**: Most importantly, we will ask “where should research go from here?” When we criticize, we will put more emphasis on how we could improve existing arguments and push research forward. This goal of the course will be most tied to the final project, described below.

Grading
- **Participation 20%**: This is a seminar, so I expect students to complete readings before class and come prepared to discuss each assigned reading. To receive full credit for participation, students should be prepared to make comments in class, engage with each other’s comments, and contribute to discussion.
  - Since COVID and remote learning bring particular challenges, we will have more “concrete” benchmarks for participation than in pre-COVID times.
    - In class participation: 40% of your participation grade will be based on the degree to which you participate in class with comments.
    - Discussion questions: 60% of your participation grade will be based on discussion questions that you submit before class. These are critical reflection questions like the ones we have on the syllabus. Do this three times during the semester. This is your chance to shape the discussion for that day’s class.
  - If you have a technical problem and drop out of a Zoom meeting. Please try and reconnect for 10 minutes and if it still won’t work, send me a message and we can figure out a way to make up coverage of the material.
    - One option, depending on the class’ preferences, will be to record the rest of the meeting. I will then only share that recording with students who had technical problems.

- **Take Home Midterm 20%**: [xx date]. This is a 3-5 page exam based on short essay questions. You will have 24 hours to complete it. This is an individual assignment, without collaboration.

- **Oral Presentation on Current Events Question 20%**: At different points during class, pairs of students will present on topical, current events by relating them to research we have studied. By week 3, pairs of students will have selected their presentation date. Jointly, each pair will give an 8-minute presentation and then answer questions from the class.
  - For example, for our week on the International Criminal Court, you might be asked to present on a specific case, like the one involving the United States and Afghanistan. The list of questions and topics is in the syllabus.

- **Final Research Paper 40%**: [Due xx date]. This is an original research paper in which students identify a research question, develop a theoretical argument, and assess its predictions with data. This is a minimum of 18 pages, double spaced, 12 font, regular margins.
  - Again, since COVID and remote learning are challenging, we will have a lot more interaction and intermediate steps around the completion of this assignment.

[[late policy – hour bank?; missed classes]]
Summary of Key Dates

These are the key dates for the semester, by week. Items in italics are outside of class.

**Week 1**
- Main readings: Intro and History

**Week 2**
- Main readings: Measurement and sources of HR violations
- Demonstrate citation trail following on Google Scholar

**Week 3**
- Main readings: Sources of HR violations, protests, dissent
- Choose Paper Pitch/Presentation Partners
- *Meet outside class to discuss buffet of ideas and which current event presentation you want*

**Week 4**
- Main readings: Domestic political institutions and HR
- Choose current event presentation dates for each partnership
- *Meet with partner; prepare for partner paper pitch presentation*

**Week 5**
- Main readings: NGOs, Naming and shaming
- Partners present each other’s ideas (3 min max).

**Week 6**
- Main readings: Norms and socialization
- *Meet with Prof. Chaudoin in office hours to describe 5 most relevant articles*

**Week 7**
- Main readings: External economic pressure
- *Take home midterm exam.*
- *Working on outline of paper.*

**Week 8**
- Main readings: HR Treaties
- Submit outline to Prof. Chaudoin.
- *Choose a student-chosen paper you want to nominate*

**Week 9**
- Main readings: Transitional justice, Ad hoc tribunals
- Nominate student chosen papers.
- *Prepare your paper presentation (8 minutes max)*

**Week 10**
- Main readings: International institutions
- Vote on student chosen papers.
- *Submit “Key Figure” to Prof. Chaudoin*

**Week 11**
- Main readings: Public opinion

**Week 12**
- Main readings: Student-chosen papers
**Academic Integrity**

Students should be aware that in this course collaboration of any sort on any work submitted for formal evaluation is not permitted. This means that you may not discuss your problem sets, paper assignments, exams, or any other assignments with other students. All work should be entirely your own and must use appropriate citation practices to acknowledge the use of books, articles, websites, lectures, discussions, etc., that you have consulted to complete your assignments.

The exceptions to this policy will be clear from the syllabus (eg a group presentation or peer feedback on a paper draft).

This course also follows Harvard College's policies on plagiarism. Specifically, any material submitted to meet course requirements - homework assignments, papers, projects, posted comments, examinations - is expected to be a student's own work, unless otherwise specified.

I ask all students to bookmark and consult regularly the Harvard Guide to Using Sources website at: http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu. You are urged to take great care in distinguishing your own ideas and thoughts from information and analysis derived from printed and electronic sources and for giving proper citational credit when you use another's idea.

**Statement on Inclusion**

I believe in incorporating a wide array of people and perspectives in this class. This means making sure that we cover the excellent work of many non-male scholars and non-white scholars. The syllabus reflects this commitment, and I work to improve it every year. This also means covering topics that pertain to gender, race, and non-US perspectives. I've worked on this balance after many discussions with students and colleagues.

I won't be perfect. For example, one shortcoming that I see in myself is that I can most easily reach for examples that relate to the United States, because it's what I know best. But I will continue to work on making this class a place where everyone can find something familiar and also something new, to become fascinated and challenged by the topic of International Relations. Please come and talk to me, with positive and negative feedback. My office door, email inbox, and ears are open.

**Readings**

A few notes on the readings:

- Complete all required readings before class.

- The suggested readings serve two purposes. They (a) provide additional material for you to engage with for your longer essays and (b) are of potential interest for people that want to read further on a subject.
- At the end of this syllabus, I have provided a “How To” guide for approaching these readings.

- Most readings can be found through HOLLIS. If not, I’ve uploaded them to our Canvas site.
WEEK 1: Intro and Syllabus

   - Ch 1-2 (History of HR law). PDF posted on Canvas.
   - Ch 2 ("Response to the Critics"). Full book available via HOLLIS.
   - What are the major historical trends and developments with respect to human rights?
   - How do the two histories differ and what is at stake in this disagreement?
   - What is the research design for this article? Focus on precisely answering some of the theory and empirics questions from the reading guide at the end of this syllabus.
   - We will often talk about real people with real experiences from a more detached, social scientific perspective. What from Carpenter’s article should we be most vigilant about moving forward? Did she make any arguments that rang particularly true for this week’s readings?

Recommended:

- Higher-altitude articles about how we study human rights:

- Interesting exchange between practitioners:

- Broad view of why we don’t emphasize ‘ism’s in this class

- Methodological piece about linking theory and empirics in IR; useful as a general template.
WEEK 2: Data, Measurement + Sources of Human Rights Abuse


- What are the most consequential measurement decisions when we measure human rights?


- How do these two articles differ in their explanations for the source of human rights violations? Thinking about the two readings on measurement, which types of abuses are more likely to come from which source – the one implicit in Conrad and Moore or the one emphasized in Slough and Fariss?

Recommended:

- Other works that focus on measurement:

- Other works that build on Fariss' dynamic argument:

- Well known articles that lay out causes of “noncompliance.” The debate and contrast between these two arguments is still very influential,
**WEEK 3: Sources of abuse cont. + Protests and Dissent**


Recommended:

- Repression and Dissent
  - [needs more]

- Methodological argument related to rainfall

- Models of protest:
**WEEK 4: Domestic Political and Legal Institutions**

   - Ch xx


**Recommended:**

- **On democracy and human rights**

- **On domestic legal institutions (often in relation to international courts or treaties)**
- The effect of foreign courts

- The effect of media freedom
WEEK 5: NGOs + Naming and Shaming

   o Ch 1-3

   - What are the main theoretical roles played by NGOs? What are the most persuasive pieces of empirical evidence about their effectiveness?


   - If these Bakke et al are correct, are we likely to over- or under-estimate the effects of naming and shaming on state practices?
   - What about if Meernik et al are correct?


Recommended:

- NGOs
- NGO's, not necessarily about human rights
  o Sell, Susan K., and Aseem Prakash. "Using ideas strategically: The contest between
  business and NGO networks in intellectual property rights." International Studies
  Quarterly 48, no. 1 (2004): 143-175.
  o Prakash, Aseem, and Mary Kay Gugerty, eds. Advocacy organizations and collective
  o Hadden, Jennifer. "Explaining variation in transnational climate change activism: the
  role of inter-movement spillover." Global Environmental Politics 14, no. 2 (2014): 7-
  25.
  o Hadden, Jennifer, and Lorien Jasny. "The power of peers: how transnational
  advocacy networks shape NGO strategies on climate change." British Journal of

- Naming and Shaming
  o Hafner-Burton, Emilie M. "Sticks and stones: Naming and shaming the human rights
  o Krain, Matthew. "J'accuse! Does Naming and Shaming Perpetrators Reduce the
  Severity of Genocides or Politicides?." International Studies Quarterly 56, no. 3
  o Hendrix, Cullen S., and Wendy H. Wong. "When is the pen truly mighty? Regime type
  and the efficacy of naming and shaming in curbing human rights abuses." British
  o DeMeritt, Jacqueline HR. "International organizations and government killing: Does
  naming and shaming save lives?." International Interactions 38, no. 5 (2012): 597-
  621.
  o Murdie, Amanda, and Dursun Peksen. "The impact of human rights INGO shaming
  o Franklin, James C. "Shame on you: the impact of human rights criticism on political
  repression in Latin America." International Studies Quarterly 52, no. 1 (2008): 187-
  211.
  o Murdie, Amanda, and Tavishi Bhasin. "Aiding and abetting: Human rights INGOs
  o Terman, Rochelle. "Islamophobia and media portrayals of Muslim women: A
  computational text analysis of US news coverage." International Studies Quarterly
  o Terman, Rochell and Jamie Gruffyd-Jones. “Don’t tell us what to do: Human rights
WEEK 6: Norms and Socialization

Separate better into spiral, boomerang, plus recent stuff; can do once books back from office. Or pick one, eg spiral, and only focus on that?


   a. Ch 1,3,5

   a. Ch 1,5,8

Recommended:

- Norms

- Persuasion and Socialization

- Diffusion


WEEK 7: External Economic Pressure


Recommended:

- **Economics as a correlate of human rights conditions**
  - (We didn’t cover this topic, but domestic economic conditions can affect human rights. Here are cites to get you started down this trail.)

- **Investment**

- **Trade/Sanctions**

- **Foreign Aid**
- Special issue on performance indicators (several articles in this issue):

- Other (not sure how to classify these):
WEEK 8: Treaties

   a. Ch 1,3,4,6


Recommended:

- Classic debate on the effect of treaties:

- Methodological articles about how we study the effects of institutions/treaties:

- General work on human rights treaties
- General models of international legal bodies:

- CAT

- CEDAW

- ICCPR

- International Humanitarian Law
WEEK 9: Transitional Justice, Ad Hoc Institutions

[Find primers on ICTY, ICTR]

Brief, easy-read primers on: the International Criminal Court, the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.


Recommended:

- Non-academic books/resources:
  o (These are books that cover genocide and related tribunals. They chronicle people’s real world experiences and practices. They can be fascinating and horrifying.)
  o Gourevitch, Philip. We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families. Vol. 24. Pan Macmillan, 2015.
  o Contraversial BBC documentary on the Rwandan genocide: https://vimeo.com/107867605

- Truth Commissions and domestic prosecutions

- Tribunals
WEEK 10: Permanent international institutions

Brief, easy-read primers on: the International Criminal Court, the Universal Periodic Review (which is a process under the UN Council on Human Rights) and the Inter American Court of Human Rights.


Recommended:
- The ICC:
- The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR)
  - (This week doesn’t currently have an assignment about the European Court of Human Rights, but this link has a primer if your research covers the ECtHR.)

- UPR, The UN Commission on Human Rights // UN Human Rights Council
WEEK 11: Public Opinion


*The first two articles concern public opinion in larger, more developed countries. The second two focus on countries outside of the “West.” Why might opinions be similar or different in these two groups of countries? Why is it important to study both?*

*The Real World*: Read the referee reports for the Chapman and Chaudoin article and the response memo. (*) This is a glimpse into the real world of academia.

Recommended:

- Developed countries:

- Less developed countries:
WEEK 12: Student Chosen Papers

For this week, students will choose the papers.

A Note on Methods

This course assigns the appropriate papers regardless of their methodological sophistication. There’s not really any way around this. Modern political science heavily uses formal and quantitative methods and it wouldn’t do much good to only teach old things for which I could find “non-tech’ed up” versions. That said, some students may not have had game theory and/or quantitative methods. Try to read as much as you can and spend time trying to work through mathematical concepts, even if they are hard or unfamiliar. The questions below will help you be a smart consumer of material even if it is methodologically over your head.

Critical Reading Questions

These are questions you should ask of everything you read or write, in this class and beyond. The writing of all papers involves making choices. This is a guide to how you can critically evaluate the author’s choices.

Research Question:

- **What is the underlying research question?**
  - “What is the effect of this on that?”
  - “What explains variation in this?”

- **What is the underlying variation being explained?**
  - Why is that variation inherently important?

Theory:

- **What are the assumptions?** All theories are a collection of simplifying assumptions. Our assumptions usually pertain to: Who are the actors in the model, what do they want, and what choices are they making to try and get what they want? What information do they have available as they make these decisions?

- **What is the key result(s) of the theoretical model?** These are usually in one of two forms:
  - “There exists”: A model might demonstrate the existence of an equilibrium with certain features.
  - “Comparative statics”: These are predictions about the relationship between two variables that are derived from the model. They relate an exogenous (explanatory, independent, etc.) variable to an endogenous choice (outcome, dependent variable, decision, action, etc.).

- **How might alternative assumptions lead to different results?**
  - In reading models, it is never a useful criticism to say “The model made this assumption, which clearly isn’t right.” It’s a model. By definition, it “isn’t right.”
  - It is a useful criticism to say “The model assumed this, but if we assumed that then result [x] might be different.”

Empirics:
- **What is the laboratory** – i.e. the collection of real world phenomena – in which the author has chosen to test their argument?
  o You could also call this the population from which the sample will be drawn.
  o Good laboratories are (a) big: if you can test your argument in a more important real-world setting, that’s better than testing it on something obscure (b) fit: the real-world phenomenon match closely the assumptions made in your theory and (c) defend: against potential threats to inference. More on threats to inference later.

- **Who are the subjects** in the lab (or what is the sample)? What are the units of observation, over what time period, etc.

- **How does the paper measure the key independent and dependent variables?**
  o Are these good measurements? Do they map well onto the theoretical concept they purport to measure?

- **What is the key relationship in the data that the paper finds (or doesn’t find)?**
  o Quantitative and qualitative data analysis and everything in between are, at their core, *the exact same thing*. They are the search for relationships in data. The only differences are that one approach writes down models of these relationships mathematically and uses numerical data.
  o Does the relationship predicted by the theory find support?
  o How large, substantively, is the relationship? E.g. “A 1% increase in the number of unionized workers is associated with a 30% increase in tariffs.”

- **Threats to inference:**
  o Omitted stuff: Things the author should have included but did not *and which affect the relationship between the independent and dependent variable*. Note, this argument is useless without the second part, in italics.
  o Endogeneity: “There is something else that affects the independent and dependent variable which creates the illusion of a relationship between the two but really it’s this other thing that’s doing the work.”
  o If you looked at a different sample, you’d find something else.
  o Something about what you’ve done has made you overconfident about the relationship you’ve found and your result may really be spurious.
  o And many, many more.

**Impact:**

- **Why should I care about this paper?**
  o How much better do I understand a particular real-world phenomenon after reading this than before?
  o How important is that phenomenon in the first place?
  o If this paper is right, then who is wrong? Was the literature headed in one particular direction and this paper changed the literature’s course?
  o Are there other real-world phenomena that this argument could help us understand?
Note that not all papers will fit this template. Some will be theory only, while others will be empirical. That’s ok. This will still be a helpful guide.

Real world topics to add?

- Hong Kong protests against China’s security law; protests angle or US sanctions angle
- ICC and US and Afghanistan

Ask them to subscribe to HRW and AI daily reports? Morning multilateralism?