

Human Rights: Foundational Concepts, Global Challenges

Summer Course: Schedule & Weekly Topics

Week 1: Foundations of Human Rights & International Frameworks

- **What are human rights?** Historical origins and philosophical foundations.
- The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** and key international treaties.
- Case Study: **The role of the UN and NGOs in protecting human rights.**
- **Activity Prep:** UN Simulation – Students prepare to represent different nations in a human rights negotiation.
- **Activity:** Model UN session

1. What Are Human Rights? Historical Origins & Philosophical Foundations

Readings:

- **United Nations: What Are Human Rights?** (UN Human Rights Office)
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/what-are-human-rights>
- **The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy – Human Rights**
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rights-human/>

Videos:

- **Amnesty International – What Are Human Rights?** (3 min)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5K7GKG5C7d8>
- **Crash Course – Human Rights** (10 min)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRhGc7tJp7g>

2. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) & Key Treaties

Readings:

- **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Plain Language Version)**
<https://www.youthforhumanrights.org/what-are-human-rights/universal-declaration-of-human-rights/articles-1-30.html>
- **UN Treaty Collection – Core Human Rights Treaties** (Overview of key legal documents.)
https://treaties.un.org/Pages/Treaties.aspx?id=4&subid=A&clang=_en

Videos:

- **The Story of Human Rights (9-minute overview of the UDHR)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oh3BbLk5UIQ>
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3. Case Study: The Role of the UN & NGOs in Protecting Human Rights

Readings:

- **How the United Nations Protects Human Rights (OHCHR)** (*Explains the UN's role.*)
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/about-us/un-human-rights-system>
- **What Do NGOs Do for Human Rights? (Human Rights Careers)**
<https://www.humanrightscareers.com/issues/how-ngos-protect-human-rights/>
- **The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Global Advocacy** (*Short explainer*) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/>

Videos:

- **UN Human Rights Council Explained (3 minutes)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SGL7N2eiw>
 - **How NGOs Work to Protect Human Rights (5 minutes)** (*Overview of Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and others.*)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EwTjDnRQFU>
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4. Activity: UN Simulation – Human Rights Negotiation

Readings:

- **UN Human Rights Council Simulation – Classroom Guide (Middle & High School Level)**
<https://www.unhcr.org/handbooks/2023/2023-handbook/virtual-simulation-human-rights-council/>
- **Amnesty International: Role-Playing Human Rights Negotiations (Free PDF lesson plan)** (*Step-by-step guide.*)
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/education/>

Videos:

- **How Model United Nations Works (Quick student explainer, 5 minutes)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YOkJDHe-OmI>

Week 2: Contemporary Challenges in Human Rights

- **Freedom of Expression vs. Hate Speech** – Legal boundaries and real-world implications.
- **Gender Rights & LGBTQ+ Protections** – Intersectionality, discrimination, and legal protections worldwide.
- **Migration & Refugee Rights** – The legal status and human rights challenges of displaced persons.
- **Activity Prep: Structured Debates** – Students engage in discussions on controversial human rights issues.
- **Activity:** Structured Debates

Readings:

- **United Nations: Freedom of Expression & Hate Speech – What's the Difference?**
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/freedom-expression>
- **Freedom of Speech vs. Hate Speech: What's the Line? (Human Rights Watch)**
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/06/14/freedom-speech-vs-hate-speech>
- **Freedom of Speech on Campuses**
<https://www.thefire.org/research-learn/fires-guide-free-speech-campus>

Videos:

- **Crash Course: Freedom of Speech (9 min)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnSxLpuPho>
- **What Is Hate Speech? (United Nations, 3 min)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4VGS8wbqL6M>

2. Gender Rights and LGBTQ+ Protections: Intersectional Perspectives on Equality

Readings:

- **United Nations: Gender Equality & Human Rights**
<https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/gender-equality>
- **United Nations: Free and Equal Campaign**
<https://www.un.org/en/fight-racism/vulnerable-groups/lgbtqi-plus>
- **Intersectionality -- A Primer**
https://www.aapf.org/_files/ugd/62e126_19f84b6cbf6f4660bac198ace49b9287.pdf

Videos:

- **Why Gender Equality Matters (United Nations, 4 min)**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FbD9H_47bI
- **What Is Intersectionality? (5 min)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1isIM0ytKE>

3. Migration and Refugee Rights: The Legal Status of Displaced Persons

Readings:

- **United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR): Who Is a Refugee?**
<https://www.unhcr.org/us/about-unhcr/who-we-protect/refugees#:~:text=A%20refugee%20is%20someone%20who,that%20refugees%20are%20entitled%20to.>
- **Laws & Treaties**
 - [The Universal Declaration of Human Rights \(Article 14\)](#), which states that everyone has the right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution in other countries
 - [The 1951 UN Refugee Convention](#) (and its 1967 Protocol), which protects refugees from being returned to countries where they risk being persecuted
 - [The 1990 Migrant Workers Convention](#), which protects migrants and their families
 - Regional Refugee law instruments (including [1969 OAU Convention](#), [1984 Cartagena Declaration](#), [Common European Asylum System](#) and [Dublin Regulation](#))
- **The Global Refugee Crisis Explained**
<https://www.concern.net/news/global-refugee-crisis-explained>

Videos:

- **Who Is a Refugee? (3 min)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GvzZGplGbL8>
- **What Are Refugee Rights? (5 min)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qpOEaBwFuj0>

4. Activity: Structured Debates on Contemporary Human Rights Issues

Debate Resources:

- **Freedom of Speech vs. Hate Speech**
<https://www.thefire.org/research-learn/hate-speech-legal#:~:text=There%20is%20no%20%E2%80%9Chate%20speech,do%20not%20stifle%20public%20debate.>
- **LGBTQ+ Rights: Debate Questions & Legal Perspectives (Human Rights Watch)**
<https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/02/19/all-we-want-equality/religious-exemptions-and-discrimination-against-lgbt-people>

- **Should Countries Be Required to Accept Refugees?**
<https://www.nrc.no/shorthand/fr/a-few-countries-take-responsibility-for-most-of-the-worlds-refugees/index.html>

Debate Skills & Structuring Arguments:

- **Model United Nations Flow of Debate Training Video**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYYwBLJ9q5E>
- **Basics of Formal Debate (3 min)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1TSkkxu8on0>
- **Critical Thinking: Every Logical Fallacy Explained in 11 Minutes**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCg-SNOteQQ>

Week 3: Activism, Law, and Future Pathways

- **Grassroots Movements & Social Media** – The role of activism in shaping human rights law and policy.
- **Human Rights & Climate Crisis** – Legal obligations, ethical responsibilities, and environmental justice.
- **Careers in Human Rights** – Exploring paths in law, policy, and international development.
- **Final Project Clinic: Advocacy Campaign or Policy Proposal** – Students present their own human rights initiative.
- **Final Project Presentations**

1. Grassroots Movements & Social Media in Human Rights Advocacy

Readings:

- **United Nations: The Importance of Youth in Grassroots Efforts**
<https://www.un.org/en/peace-and-security/youth-peace-and-security-guide>
- **Social Media and Human Rights Advocacy**
<https://www.humanrightspulse.com/mastercontentblog/how-social-media-is-changing-the-face-of-human-rights-activism>
- **The Role of Digital Activism in the Arab Spring**
<https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:05e13455-3e16-478b-b0b3-f75b58ef489c/files/m047d301ca586576dc9ba2eea18331ee0>

Videos:

- **"Bear Witness, Take Action"**
A YouTube Originals series featuring discussions and performances centered on racial

justice and the power of activism. [en.wikipedia.org+1en.wikipedia.org+1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xIg7jG3P8Tg) and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xIg7jG3P8Tg>

- **"Dalit Camera"**

A YouTube channel documenting the lives and issues of Dalit, Adivasi, Bahujan, and other minority communities in India, showcasing grassroots activism through digital media. [en.wikipedia.org](https://www.youtube.com/c/DalitCamera) and <https://www.youtube.com/c/DalitCamera>

2. Human Rights and the Climate Crisis: Legal Obligations & Ethical Responsibilities

Readings:

- **United Nations: Climate Change and Human Rights**
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/climate-change#:~:text=States%20have%20a%20human%20rights,energy%20lives%20of%20human%20dignity.>
- **What Is Climate Justice? (University of California)**
<https://centerclimatejustice.universityofcalifornia.edu/what-is-climate-justice/>
- **How Indigenous Communities Are Fighting for Climate Justice (UN Secretariat for Climate Change)**
<https://unfccc.int/news/indigenous-peoples-leaders-in-climate-action>

Videos:

- **Climate Change and Human Rights (United Nations Special Rapporteur, 9 min)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqRvlqOpHt0>
 - **How the Law Can Fight Climate Change (International Peace Institute Panel Discussion, 1 hr, 24 mins)**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXzsiziFS_Y
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3. Exploring Careers in Human Rights: Law, Policy, and International Development

Readings:

- **How to Start a Career in Human Rights**
<https://lacuna.org.uk/justice/human-rights-career-how-to-become-a-human-rights-lawyer-journalist-humanitarian/>
- **Careers in International Law and Human Rights**
<https://www.law.georgetown.edu/human-rights-institute/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2021/04/Georgetown-Law-Human-Rights-Career-Guide.pdf>
- **Jobs at the United Nations: Careers in Human Rights & Development**
<https://careers.un.org/lbw/home.aspx>

Videos:

- **What Can You Do with a Human Rights Degree? (5 min)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A110qtbB5So>
 - **How Do You Stop Human Rights Violations?**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ghUSEHe7Wug>
 - **How to Get a Job in Human Rights (Tips from a UN Worker, 15 min)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sW8qstrGqyM>
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4. Final Project: Policy Brief or Advocacy Campaign on a Human Rights Issue

Project Guidelines & Inspiration:

- **Policy Brief Tutorial and Toolkit**
<https://law.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/White-Papers-Guidelines.pdf>
- **Examples of Successful Advocacy Campaigns**
<https://www.hubdialer.com/blog-post/inspiring-advocacy-campaign-examples/>
- **How to Design an Advocacy Campaign (ACLU overview)**
<https://www.peoplepower.org/guides/design-your-own-advocacy-campaign-in-6-steps/>

Guides:

- **How to Make a Human Rights Campaign**
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/act770512004en.pdf>
- **How to Write a Policy Brief**
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/act770512004en.pdf>

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