



INTLSTD 300/ HIST 300

Human Wrongs /Human Rights:

History and Practice of Human Rights

Teaching Team:

Instructor of Record: Prof. Melanie S. Tanielian

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Course Description

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world – indeed it is the only thing that ever does (Margaret Meade, Anthropologist)

This course will introduce the history and practice of human rights. The goal is to provide students with the historical and philosophical background that underlies contemporary humanitarian and human rights practices and debates, as well as explore the contemporary workings of the human rights regime. Drawing on various interdisciplinary scholarship, the course will ask questions to improve our historical understanding of the paradoxes and perplexities of Human Rights. This course will answer the general questions: What are Human Rights? Where did they originate? What institutions and legal frameworks have affirmed and advocated Human Rights in history? What are the critiques? We will collectively ponder whether Human Rights is simply a Western invention that is imposed on the rest of the world. Are the universal claims inherent in the Human Rights discourse attainable? *How does the history of human rights relate to histories of imperialism,*

colonialism, racial, ethnic, and gender discrimination? By the semester's end, students will gain a fundamental understanding of how wrongs such as slavery, human trafficking, imperialism, colonialism, war, genocide, and the climate crisis have influenced or failed to influence human rights initiatives, along with an exploration of the institutional, political, legal, and ethical responses to these issues.

Since Hist 300/INTLSTD 300: Human Wrongs/Human Rights meets the Race and Ethnicity (R&E) requirement, we will do a lot of thinking about how inequities are not only addressed by Human Rights discourse and practice but also, MORE importantly, how racial and ethnic discrimination were embedded in liberal thought which sits at the very foundation for human rights and its practice. We will examine how the 'human' as a category deserving of equal, inalienable, and indivisible rights was constructed over time and how rights, whether civil, political, economic, social, or cultural in nature, were not always applied to every human person, but rather are historically contingent. We examine how Western states committed to the equality of "all men" beginning in the late 18th century qualified membership on who was considered fully human and deserving of rights based on racial, ethnic, class, and gender differences at home and in their colonial possessions. In fact, we will continuously view how a "universal category such as human rights" in practice is exclusionary as much as it is inclusionary, both past and present.

Assignments

LEARNING TRACKS 60 % of Course Grade:

YOU ARE IN CHARGE OF WHAT YOU WANT TO LEARN !!!! HERE ARE THREE TRACKS WITH DIFFERENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND DIFFERENT ASSIGNMENT STYLES. YOU WILL PICK YOUR ADVENTURE/LEARNING EXPERIENCE BY CHOOSING **ONE TRACK EACH COUNTING 60 % OF YOUR GRADE AND WILL HAVE TO FOLLOW IT GOING THROUGH THE SEMESTER. THERE IS NO SWITCHING SO PLEASE REVIEW CAREFULLY WHAT EACH OF THE TRACKS OFFERS YOU.**

Engagement Track (ET)

The Engagement Track is designed to reward sustained intellectual effort, reflection, and real-world connection. It includes **7 Short Homework Discussions (15 % of this track)**, ensuring consistent comprehension and preparation. Students will also complete **three reflection assignments (60 %)**, responding to public lectures, panels, cultural events, a museum visit, community meeting, or creative project. You will be given a list of 5 possible events (you chose 3 to write about) at the beginning of the semester. You are expected to attend in person so make sure to mark them in your calendar, as there will be brief, debrief sessions after. Each reflection asks students to summarize key ideas, link them to course concepts, and articulate personal or intellectual growth. The track culminates in a **Final Engagement Synthesis (25 %)**, a written or multimodal piece that weaves together earlier reflections, course materials, and a personal insight. **Rather than test recall, this track values curiosity, connection-making, and critical self-awareness — the lifelong habits of an engaged thinker.**

Writing for Impact Track (WIT)

This track guides students through the process of writing compelling, voice-driven op-eds on social, political, or human rights issues that matter to them. Over the term, students will develop **three original op-eds (60%)**, each drafted through a scaffolded process that includes brainstorming, outlining, and peer review. Each op-ed (700–900 words) should be written for a public audience and be suitable for publication in a local or digital outlet. Students are also required to attend **two out-of-class writing workshops (20%)** from a set of three; these sessions focus on essential writing skills such as audience awareness, rhetorical strategy, and revision. The track concludes with a **Reflection Memo (20%)**, in which students assess their writing decisions, reflect on their growth, and explain the personal stakes of the issues they chose to write about. **The Writing for Impact Track emphasizes clarity, urgency, and authenticity — challenging students to write not just for a grade, but to influence public discourse.**

Synthesis & Strategy Track (SST)

This track emphasizes analytical precision, content mastery, and strategic thinking under pressure. Students will complete one in-class **midterm exam (40 %)** and one in-class comprehensive **final exam (50%)**, both designed to assess their ability to synthesize key concepts, interpret complex material, and apply course ideas in high-stakes scenarios. To support consistent preparation and deep engagement with the material, students are also required to **complete all 6** (we will drop the lowest score) **open-book low stakes reading quizzes (10 %)** throughout the semester. These quizzes reinforce comprehension, build retention, and sharpen reasoning ahead of major assessments. The Synthesis & Strategy Track values rigor, clarity, and the ability to think critically under time constraints — skills that are essential for academic success and real-world decision-making.

2. Mandatory Attendance: 20 % of Course Grade

You can earn a total of 530 attendance points in this class. Earning points for lectures is based on your attendance and participation in discussions and i-clicker. Your attendance in discussion section will be based on preparation and engagement. Here is the scale:

100% 490–530 A	(80–82%) 400–414 C
(93–99%) 460–493 A-	(73–76%) 370–384 C-
(90–92%) 445–459 B+	(70–72%) 355–369 D+
(87–89%) 430–444 B	(67–69%) 340–354 D
(83–86%) 415–429 B-	(63–66%) 325–339 D-

3. Mandatory Group Project: 20 % Course Grade Pass/No Pass

The Collaborative Campaign Project is a semester-long group assignment in which students work together to research, analyze, and creatively communicate a contemporary human rights issue. Each group will design a campaign that includes historical context, ethical considerations, and a strategic public-facing message (such as a digital exhibit, social media series, policy brief, or educational toolkit). The purpose of the project is to cultivate collaborative research skills, deepen understanding of a specific human rights challenge, and practice translating academic knowledge into accessible public communication.

The project is graded **Pass/No Pass, awarded individually rather than collectively**. A student receives a **Pass** by demonstrating meaningful participation in the group's work across the semester. This includes completing assigned tasks, engaging in planning and collaboration, contributing to the final presentation, and submitting an individual reflection. At each major deliverable, groups submit a brief **Contribution Log** summarizing each member's role, followed by a final **Contribution Statement** signed by all members. Students whose contributions are documented as insufficient—through logs, peer evaluation, or omission from the group's final statement—will receive a **No Pass**, even if the group's overall project is strong. This system ensures fairness, transparency, and shared accountability while allowing groups the flexibility to define roles according to their strengths.

Global Learning Goals

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. **Analyze the historical development of human rights**, including their philosophical foundations and political, legal, and cultural transformations across time.
2. **Critically examine the limitations, exclusions, and contradictions** within human rights discourse, especially as they relate to race, ethnicity, gender, class, and colonialism.

3. **Evaluate the role of institutions, laws, and movements** in advocating for, resisting, or shaping human rights practices.
4. **Engage with contemporary debates and humanitarian challenges** through a historically informed lens.
5. **Demonstrate depth of understanding through one of three learning tracks:**
 - **Engagement Track:** Build intellectual curiosity and self-awareness through reflective writing, experiential learning, and critical response to public discourse.
 - **Writing for Impact Track:** Develop persuasive public arguments that connect personal voice to broader human rights issues, aimed at real-world audiences.
 - **Synthesis & Strategy Track:** Apply rigorous analytical and strategic thinking in timed assessments that synthesize course materials and critical frameworks.
6. **Collaborate on a group project** that explores a major human rights issue, demonstrating the ability to research, present, and reflect collectively.
7. **Participate meaningfully in class discussions and lectures**, contributing to a respectful, dynamic learning community grounded in shared inquiry and mutual accountability.

Course Materials

Required Readings and Class Materials

1. **Course Textbook:** Michael Goodhart, *Human Rights: Theory and Practice*, Oxford University Press, 2023, 4th Edition
2. All other readings will be made available in **electronic format** through the **Canvas Course** site in PDF format. All readings will be listed by week in the MODULES function.

Course Policies

Inclusive Teaching and Learning:

In this course, we will strive to acknowledge and draw insights from each other's different identities and experiences, to acknowledge that everyone present belongs in this community and is an equal and valued part of it, and to respond flexibly and compassionately to our changing and diverse circumstances. I will work to clearly communicate the expectations and norms for the course and to develop processes that support equitable access and contributions to interactive elements of the learning environment. I will ask you to provide regular feedback on your experience and progress in the course so that I can address your evolving needs and concerns. I will ask you to complete a course survey at least once during the semester. We will also develop community guidelines together with your GSIs in section. If at any point you experience exclusion, a lack of respect, or anything that prevents you from learning in this course, please contact me as soon as possible.

Attendance

Both attendance in lecture and section are mandatory. All students are expected to arrive punctually and prepared for every class meeting. Attendance of lectures is essential for you to succeed in the course, as lectures carry the core of the course. You have **two-unexcused absences** for lecture and **one-unexcused** for discussion section (as sometimes we just need a break). Absences due to unexpected illness, family emergencies, or other unforeseen events shall be excused. Absences due to their commitment to officially represent the University (performing arts, scientific or artistic endeavors, or intercollegiate athletics) shall be excused. Absences due to religious observance shall be excused. For your absence to be **excused**, documentation **needs to be** handed in to me or your GSI the week after your return. If you must miss a class, make sure to obtain notes from your classmate right away. **Warning:** Neither Readings nor Power Points will convey the entire scope of materials covered in lecture. **The key is communication.** Make sure to speak to me or GSI if you are having difficulties.

Use of Electronic Devices in Lecture:

You will be required to take detailed notes in the lecture and in discussion sections. You will not be able to retain all the information if you do not write things down and refer back to them to study for quizzes and exams. I expect you to take notes by hand, so no laptops will be allowed in class unless otherwise noted. *We will use your phones for i-Clicker, so please bring those to class. Please let us know if you have problems obtaining a smartphone.* This policy is based on research that learning is inhibited by typing notes and diminished dramatically by stimuli that draws attention away from lecture to conversations and happenings outside of it. If you need an exception for this policy, such as for learning-ability based educational technology needs, please contact us. We are open to such requests and will accommodate any such needs.

Late Papers and Assignments:

There are **NO LATE assignments in this course**. This is a strict rule as there are many moving pieces and it would simply overwhelm the teaching team. Please look at the tracks carefully and see how they fit into your schedule before you commit to either of them. If you would like help with choosing please make an appointment with a member of the teaching team.

Correspondence and Office Hours:

a. Email Correspondence:

Your questions and input in the class are certainly welcome and answering questions you may have are of high priority. Here are the guidelines for communicating with me and your GSI:

- For questions regarding the location of and assignment dates of course readings and resources, grading, and accommodations, please consult the course syllabus before emailing us.
- Please include the keywords “INTLSTD 300/Hist 300” in the subject line of all your emails.
- I will read and respond to emails regarding course content and/or logistics routinely and will answer them usually within 24-48 hours, *excluding weekends.*

- If the question is better answered in office hours, I will ask you to make an appointment with me or your GSI.
- Any e-mails regarding grades will need to first go to your GSI, and only if you cannot hash it out will I get involved.

Important Note: E-mail and online discussions are governed by the same rules of academic conduct as your behavior in class. Please use common courtesy, be polite, and, of course, avoid sending or forwarding aggressive, sexist, racially discriminatory, obscene, offensive, libelous, or defamatory comments of any kind.

b. Office Hours:

I will hold office hours by appointment. All office hours will be held in my office on the third floor in Weiser Hall or over Zoom. GSIs will have separate office hours to be announced in sections

Academic Misconduct:

The University of Michigan community functions best when its members treat one another with honesty, fairness, respect, and trust. The college promotes the assumption of personal responsibility and integrity and prohibits all forms of academic dishonesty and misconduct. All cases of academic misconduct will be referred to the LSA Office of Student Academic Affairs. Being found responsible for academic misconduct will usually result in a grade sanction, in addition to any sanction from the college. For more information, including examples of behaviors that are considered academic misconduct and potential sanctions, please see LSA's [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

Use of ChatGPT and Other AI Tools:

Instructors in this course may ask you to provide evidence of your learning through written work. When they do, the writing you submit must be of your own creation. Your writing will naturally be informed by other written work. When it is, you must be sure to acknowledge this influence through appropriate citation. In the past, the 'other written work' was always created by another human. These days, artificial intelligence (AI) tools can be used to generate text, code, and images in response to a prompt. Such automatically **generated text is not your work and cannot be submitted as if it is**. But let's be real you are probably going

to use it, so lets understand that work generated by **AI tools like ChatGPT is a source that may inform your writing, just as books, papers, lecture notes, websites, and the results of Google searches can, so you will HAVE to indicate when you are referring to an inquiry made via AI by collecting the responses in a google doc and linking to it in your written work.** I am not telling you anything new BUT as always, it's your responsibility to assess the reliability of every source you use. In that context, you should be aware that the output of AI tools is constructed to sound plausible, and not checked by any expert. At times these results are completely invented. **DO NOT TRUST** any citation given by AI.

Sexual Misconduct Policy:

Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, which includes sexual misconduct — including harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. We understand that sexual violence can undermine students' academic success and we encourage anyone dealing with sexual misconduct to talk to someone about their experience, so they can get the support they need. Confidential support and academic advocacy can be found with the Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center (SAPAC) on their 24-hour crisis line, 734.936.3333 and at sapac@umich.edu. Alleged violations can be non-confidentially reported to the Equity, Civil Rights, and Title IX Office (ECRT) at ecrtoffice@umich.edu.

Accommodations:

The University of Michigan recognizes disability as an integral part of diversity and is committed to creating an inclusive and equitable educational environment for students with disabilities. Students who are experiencing a disability-related barrier should contact [Services for Students with Disabilities](mailto:ssdoffice@umich.edu) (734-763-3000 or ssdoffice@umich.edu). For students who are connected with SSD, accommodation requests can be made in Accommodate. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your SSD Coordinator or visit SSD's Current Student webpage. SSD considers aspects of the course design, course learning objects and the individual academic and course barriers experienced by the student. Further conversation with SSD, instructors, and the student may be warranted to ensure an accessible course experience.

Mental Health and Well-Being:

University students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressures and challenges associated with relationships, mental health, alcohol or other drugs, identities, finances, etc. If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help is a courageous thing to do for yourself and those who care about you. If the source of your stressors is academic, please contact me so that we can find solutions together. For personal concerns, U-M offers a variety of resources, many which are listed on the [Resources for Student Well-being](#) webpage. You can also search for additional well-being resources on that website.

Course Schedule

Week 1: The Team, The Course, The Topic (Jan. 8)

Thursday: Introductions Lecture (10 points)

No readings

Section: Introductions to Human Rights (20 points)

Track Choice Survey: What is it that you would like to learn?

Total Reading: 0 pages/ Total Attendance Points: 30 points

Week 2: Basic Concepts (Jan. 13 & 15)

Tuesday: What Makes Us Human? (10 points)

Readings:

1. Aristotle: Politics (7 pages)

Thursday: Forms of Law and the Meaning of Sovereignty (10 points)

Readings:

1. Cicero: On the Law (8 pages)
2. Thomas Hobbes: Leviathan (12 pages)

Section: Philosophical Foundations (20 points)

Total reading: 27 pages/ Total Attendance Points: 40

Week 3: Rights: Origins and How do they Function? (Jan 20 & 22)

Tuesday: How do Rights Work? (10 points)

Readings:

1. Jack Donnelly, "The Concept of Human Rights," in Donnelly, Jack, *Universal Human Rights*, pages 7-14. (7 pages)
2. Marie Dembour "What are Human Rights?" in *Human Rights Quarterly* 32, (2010), pages 1-6. (6 pages)
3. TEXTBOOK: Goodhart *Human Rights: Theory and Practice*, Ch. 1 (7-26) (19 pages)

Thursday: Constitutions/Revolution/ Equality and Inequality (10 points)

Readings:

1. Jean Jacques Rousseau: *The Social Contract* (7 pages)
2. Jeremy Bentham: *Anarchical Fallacies* (7 pages)
3. Immanuel Kant: *The Principles of Political Right* (7 pages)

Section: Human Rights Schools (20 points)**Total reading: 53 pages/ Total Attendance Points: 40****Week 4: Sentimentality & The Origins of Humanitarian Practices (Jan 27 & 29)****Tuesday: The Humanitarian Narrative (10 points)**

Readings:

1. Richard Rorty: *Human Rights, Rationality and Sentimentality* (16 pages)
2. Thomas Laqueur: *The Humanitarian Narrative* (29 pages)
3. Mo Tzu: *Universal Love* (10 pages)

Thursday: Empire, Race and the Origins of Humanitarianism (10 points)

Readings:

1. Film *King Leopold* (We will work with this in lecture)

Section : Humanitarian Practices... (20 points)**Total Reading: 55 pages/ Total Attendance Points: 40****Week 5: Internationalism: Beginnings and Failures (Feb 3 & 5)****Tuesday: Conventions and International Humanitarian War (10 points)**

Readings:

1. [Resolutions of the Geneva International Conference. Geneva, 26-29 October 1863](#) (1 page)
2. David Forsythe, [The Humanitarians: The International Red Cross Committee, 12-33.](#) (21 pages)

Thursday: War Crimes, Crimes against Humanity and International Justice's Early Days (10 points) (Semi-existing Lecture)

Readings:

1. Alan Kramer, The First Wave of International Courts (17 pages)
2. Watenpaugh, "[The League of Nations Rescue of Trafficked Women and Children](#)" (33 pages)

Section: Role Play War Crimes and the Armenian Genocide (1921): (20 points)

Total Reading: 51 pages/ Total Attendance Points: 40

Week 6: POST WWII Human Rights Regime (Feb 10 &12)

Tuesday: The United Nations & Whose Voices Anyway? (10 points) (Existing lecture)

Readings:

1. From Letters to the Contrary (Total 20 pages)
 - a. Chung-Shu Lo, Human Rights in the Chinese Tradition (4 pages)
 - b. Elkin - The Rights of Primitive Peoples (7 pages)
 - c. Humayun Kabir, The Rights of Man and the Islamic Tradition (4 pages)
 - d. Boris Tcheckko, The Conception of the Rights of Man in the U.S.S.R. Based On Official Documents (5 pages)

Thursday: Universalism versus Cultural Relativism (10 Points) (

1. Brooke Ackery: Theory in Practice: Making Human Rights Claims (16 pages)

Section: Debate on Contrarian Opinions / Historians Present (20 Points)

Total Reading: 36 pages/ Total Attendance Points 40

Week 7: COLD WAR Politics and Decolonization (Feb 17 & 19)

Tuesday Lecture: Human Rights in the Cold War Period & the Plight of Black Americans (10 points)

Readings:

1. W.E.B Du BOIS, Introduction to An Appeal to the World (15 pages)

Thursday Lecture: Decolonization and Third Worldism (10 Points)

Readings:

1. Roland Burke, "Some Rights are more Equal than Others" (18 pages)
2. Bandung Conference 10 Principles (10 pages)

Section: IN SECTION Midterm

Total Reading: 43 pages/ Total Points Attendance points 20

Week 8: Practicings HRs: The Ethics of Engagement (Feb 24 & 26)

Tuesday: Witnessing (10 points)

Readings:

1. [Sandra Ristovska](#): The Purchase of Witnessing (7 pages)

Thursday: Non-Profits and The Ethics of Aid (10 points)

1. [Francoise Duroch and Maelle d'Homme: Ethical considerations around the use of humanitarian imagery](#) (4 pages)

Section: Discussion White Saviorism/ Ethics of Engagement (20 Points)

Total Reading: 13 pages/ Total Attendance Points: 40

SPRING BREAK IS IN HERE

Week 9: Practicings HRs: Humanitarian Intervention (March 10 & 12)

Tuesday: The Dilemma of Intervention and Self-Determination (10 Points) Readings:

1. Alan Kuperman: Humanitarian Intervention (ch. 9 in Goodhart)(22 pages)

Thursday: What is the Red Line? And Where is Justice? (10 Points)

1. [Barnett](#): Eyewitness to Genocide (28 pages)
2. Joanna Quinn: Transitional Justice, 201- 211 (Ch. 10 in Goodhart) (10 pages)

Section: Discussion Alternative forms of Justice (20 Points)

Total Reading 60 pages/ Total Attendance Points: 40

Week 10: Case Studies: Refugee Rights (March 17 & 19)

Tuesday: The Refugee Regime: A Historical Perspective 10 Points

1. TBA

Thursday: The UN Refugee Regime

1. TBA

Section: Refugee Voices (20 Points)

Total Reading X pages/ Total Attendance Points: 40

Week 11: Case Study: Women's Rights (March 24 & 26)

Tuesday: Women's Rights as Human Rights: A Historical Perspective (10 points)

Readings:

1. Charlotte Bunch, "Women's Rights as Human Rights: Toward a Re-vision of Human Rights," *Human Rights Quarterly* 12, No. 4 (1990), pp. 486-498. (12 pages)
2. [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.](#)

**Thursday: Violence Against Women: The Private versus the Public (10 Points)
(semi-Existing Lecture)**

1. [The Declaration for the Elimination of the Violence Against Women](#)
2. [Leyla Pervizat, "In the Name of Honor," Human Rights Dialogue 2, vol. 10 \(Fall 2003\)](#)
3. Response to Pervizat by [Zehra Arat, "A Struggle on Two Fronts," Human Rights Dialogue 2, vol. 10 \(Fall 2003\)](#)

Section: Discussion 20 points

Total Reading around 40 pages/ Total Attendance Points: 40

Week 12: Case Study: Indigenous Rights (March 31 and April 2)

Tuesday: Indigenous Rights: A Historical Perspective (10 Points)

Readings:

1. [UN Declaration of Indigenous Rights](#)
2. Romero, Berra, and Shannon Speed: Indigenous Rights and Language Sovereignty (19 pages) (Goodhart, Ch. 15)

Thursday: Visitor: Eric Toups (10 Points)

Section Discussion (20 points)

Total Reading around 40 pages/ Total Attendance Points: 40

Week 13: Case Study: Nature and Human Rights (April 7 & 9)

Tuesday: Climate Action: A Historical Perspective (10 Points)

Thursday: Wrap Up Discussions. Are Human Rights a Useful Frame? (10 Points)



Section Discussion (20 Points)

Total Reading 0 pages/ Total Attendance Points: 40

Week 14: Presentations of Campaigns

Tuesday: Presentations for Sections 007-006-005 (20 points)

Thursday: Presentations for Sections 004-003-002 (20 points)