



Course Outline

Course number	RMP 135			
Course title	International Human Rights Law			
Credit points	3 ECTS (2 CP)			
Total hours	24			
Contact hours	24			
Independent studies				
Course level	Masters			
Prerequisites	None			
Category	Mandatory		Restricted elective	Free elective

COURSE RESPONSIBLE

<i>Name</i>	<i>Academic degree</i>	<i>Academic position</i>
George Ulrich	PhD	Professor

COURSE TEACHERS

<i>Name</i>	<i>Academic degree</i>	<i>Academic position</i>
George Ulrich	PhD	Professor
Daina Celma	LL.M.	Visiting lecturer

COURSE ABSTRACT

The course provides an overview of international and European human rights regimes, including the main standards and protection mechanisms. The course is structured in two parts. The first part introduces the UN human rights system and examines the two Covenants and mechanisms for the protection and promotion of human rights. It discusses in detail selected economic, social and cultural rights, such as the right to health, as well as civil and political rights, such as freedom of expression. It briefly outlines the regional human rights systems, with a particular focus on the European system. Lastly, it introduces philosophical underpinnings of human rights and addresses some contemporary challenges to human rights.

The second part of the course focuses on the examination of the substantive human rights law, with a special focus on the ECHR and, where relevant, its interrelation with the EU law. It starts by addressing the rights that reflect the most basic values of the democratic societies. Thus, it first addresses the right to life, focussing particularly on the challenges brought upon by armed conflicts, including the questions concerning jurisdiction. It then considers such rights as the prohibition of torture or inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment and prohibition of slavery and forced labour, i.a., placing those rights in the particular context of migration. It then turns to the most litigated right before the ECtHR – the right to fair trial, as well as the procedural guarantees connected with the right to liberty and security. It also addresses the freedoms guaranteed by the ECHR (the respect for private and family life; freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; freedom of expression; and freedom of assembly and association) and the shared methodology for their assessment. It continues with analysis of the right to property and prohibition of discrimination. The course concludes with analysis of the ECtHR’s approach to transversal themes, as well as with a discussion on the contemporary human rights challenges facing the European human rights system. The last lecture will also include a Q&A session.

GRADING CRITERIA

<i>Criteria.</i>	<i>Weighting</i>
In-class quiz	10%
Final exam	90%

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Participation

To fully benefit from this course, students are expected to participate actively in all sessions, part of which will be discussion-led. Students are expected to review the materials assigned by the lecturers before the relevant class.

Whereas input for the lecture sessions is mainly delivered by the course teachers, students are expected to actively participate in the seminar discussions. Seminar sessions will rely heavily on in-class discussion and peer-to-peer learning. It is especially important to read the assigned materials before attending seminars.

Examination

The course will have two examination components: in-class quiz (10% of the final grade) and the final exam (90% of the final grade). The in-class quiz will test factual knowledge related to the first part of the course. Practicalities related to its organisation will be communicated to the students during the initial course sessions. The final exam will be a take-home exam assigned after the final course session. It will consist of two equally weighted tasks (a theoretical essay style question and a case study) relating to the two main parts of the course. Students must pass the final exam in order to complete the course.

Camera policy

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~~Due to restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, some or all~~6 sessions of this course might be held online. When online, this course has a “camera on” policy given the high level of personal interaction required to accomplish the learning outcomes.

COURSE PLAN – MAIN SUBJECTS

<i>No.</i>	<i>Main subjects</i>	<i>Planned hours</i>
1	UN and regional human rights standards and protection mechanisms	8
2	Philosophical perspectives on human rights; challenges in the implementation of human rights	4
3	Analysis of substantive human rights	10
4	Contemporary challenges facing the European system of human rights	2

COURSE PLAN – SESSIONS

<i>Session</i>	<i>Session subjects and readings*</i>	<i>Lecture/ Seminar</i>
1	Introduction to human rights; Human rights in the 21 st century	Lecture
2	UN human rights standards and protection mechanisms; Brief overview of regional protection systems	Lecture
3	Working with civil and political rights – case: freedom of expression	Lecture/seminar
4	Working with economic, social and cultural rights – case: the right to health	Lecture/seminar
5	Philosophical perspectives on human rights (social contract theory, the notion of perpetual peace, natural law, legal positivism, constructivism)	Lecture
6	Challenges in the implementation of human rights	Lecture/seminar
7	ECHR and the right to life; the special case of armed conflicts	Lecture
8	ECHR and the prohibition of torture or inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment; prohibition of slavery and forced labour; the special case of migration	Lecture/seminar
9	ECHR and the right to fair trial; the right to liberty and security	Lecture/seminar
10	ECHR and the respect for private and family life; freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of expression; and freedom of assembly and association	Lecture/seminar

<i>Session</i>	<i>Session subjects and readings*</i>	<i>Lecture/ Seminar</i>
11	ECHR and the right to property and the prohibition of discrimination	Lecture/seminar
12	ECHR and the transversal themes; challenges facing the European human rights system Q&A	Seminar

**For course material please see reading list on the portal*

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course has the following main learning outcomes:

Knowledge:

Upon successful completion of the course students will have:

1. knowledge of philosophical theories about human rights and aspects of the philosophical origins of the notion of human rights;
2. enhanced knowledge of global and regional human rights standards and protection mechanisms;
3. sound understanding of some of the main challenges to human rights today;
4. enhanced familiarity with the basic notions of substantive human rights and their interpretation and application in the current global and regional environment;

Skills:

Upon successful completion of the course students will acquire:

5. legal research skills allowing them to engage in independent research;
6. skills necessary to apply the knowledge accrued to case studies;
7. analytical skills necessary to apply human rights law to a variety of different historical, political, and socio-economic settings.

Competencies:

Upon successful completion of the course students:

8. will be able to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities they have developed in the field of international human rights law, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development.

By completing the study course and successfully passing examination, the student will be able to:

<i>Learning outcomes</i>	<i>Evaluation criteria</i>		
	<i>(40-69%)</i>	<i>(70-89%)</i>	<i>(90-100%)</i>
Knowledge	The student has acquired only basic knowledge of the course subject. The student lacks understanding of some of the core issues of the course subject.	Overall, the student's knowledge complies with the expectations. However, there are issues that the student does not fully understand.	The student has demonstrated in-depth knowledge and understanding of the issues related to the course subject.

<i>Skills</i>	The student has demonstrated only basic level of skills.	The student has demonstrated good skills.	The student has demonstrated excellent skills.
<i>Competences</i>	The student can apply the knowledge only at a basic level. The student struggles with assessment and evaluation of legal issues. The student can identify the relevant legal norms. However, the student cannot correctly apply them.	The student can apply the knowledge at a reasonably good level. However, the student does not have the necessary level to be able to fully apply the acquired knowledge independently. The student has some problems to correctly apply the legal norms.	The student is able to apply the knowledge independently and correctly. The student can assess and evaluate legal issues, identify the relevant legal norms, and correctly apply them.

Please analyse the contribution of defined grading criteria to learning outcomes. Number of grading criteria and learning outcomes should correspond to previously defined one.

Grading criteria	Learning outcomes							
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
In-class quiz		x	x	x				
Final exam	x	x	x	x		x	x	x

COURSE LITERATURE

The course will primarily draw upon materials specially selected by the lecturers for any given class. Those will consist of textbook chapters, academic articles, case-law, international treaties, documents and reports of international organizations as well as media publications. The reading list and the materials will be available on the portal in advance under the relevant sections.

Throughout the course, the following textbooks will be used to introduce the students to the core topics of international human rights law:

- De Schutter, O. International Human Rights Law, Cambridge University Press, 3rd ed. 2019
- Harris, O'Boyle and Warbrick, Law on the European Convention on Human Rights, Oxford University Press 4th ed. 2018
- Reid, K. A Practitioner's Guide to the European Convention on Human Rights, Sweet & Maxwell, 6th edition, 2019

Relevant chapters of the textbooks will be posted on the portal under each topic. The students are, however, invited to consult the textbooks also on other topics of their interest.

Students are also expected to familiarize themselves with core international documents, available on the portal under General materials. Please note that the list may be updated during the course.