

LSE INTRODUCTION TO INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS, THEORY, LAW & PRACTICE

Our course will introduce you to these questions and several different ways of addressing them. We will discuss human rights as a moral and political idea, identify the place of human rights within general international law, and examine the various international systems for their protection.

In the course of that enquiry, we will pose hard questions about the importance of human rights relative to other good and values; the supposed 'universality' of human rights; the troubled relationship between international human rights law and national law; the effectiveness of the regional and global protection of human rights; and the relevance of human rights in a world of stark global inequalities, mass migration, and rapid climate change.

Session: One

Assessment*: One examination and one essay

Programme structure

Theories and Histories of Human Rights

The course begins with an introductory account of the general idea of human rights and of the history of the idea from ancient Greek origins and the Enlightenment to contemporary understandings. Students will be exposed to several enduring human rights critiques and, through a series of case-studies, examine the tensions that the practice of human rights today highlights, such as in the areas of free speech, prohibiting torture, and countering terrorism.

Structures and Standards

The course then turns to assessing the structure and standards that govern international human rights law, beginning with an introduction as to what modern international law is and how it is made. This part of the course will consider the international and regional human rights systems and the range of legal instruments and standards that have been developed.

Key issues in Human Rights

Finally, this intensive course will study selected key issues in international human rights law such as:

Self-determination

Poverty and climate change

Measuring the effectiveness of international human rights institutions

The application of human rights outside the territory of a state

Whether international human rights bind non-state actors (e.g. corporations and private organisations).

Course outcomes

The intended learning outcome is an informed and critical understanding of contemporary international human rights theory, law and practice.

Reading materials

There are several good human rights textbooks on the market, and you are strongly encouraged to purchase one.

Some titles for your consideration are:

D Moeckli et al (eds) *International Human Rights Law* (3rd edition, Oxford University Press, 2017)

P. Alston, R. Goodman & H Steiner, *International Human Rights: Texts and Materials* (Oxford University Press 2013)

R Smith, *Texts and Materials on International Human Rights*, (4th edition, Routledge, 2019).